game of the arseholes

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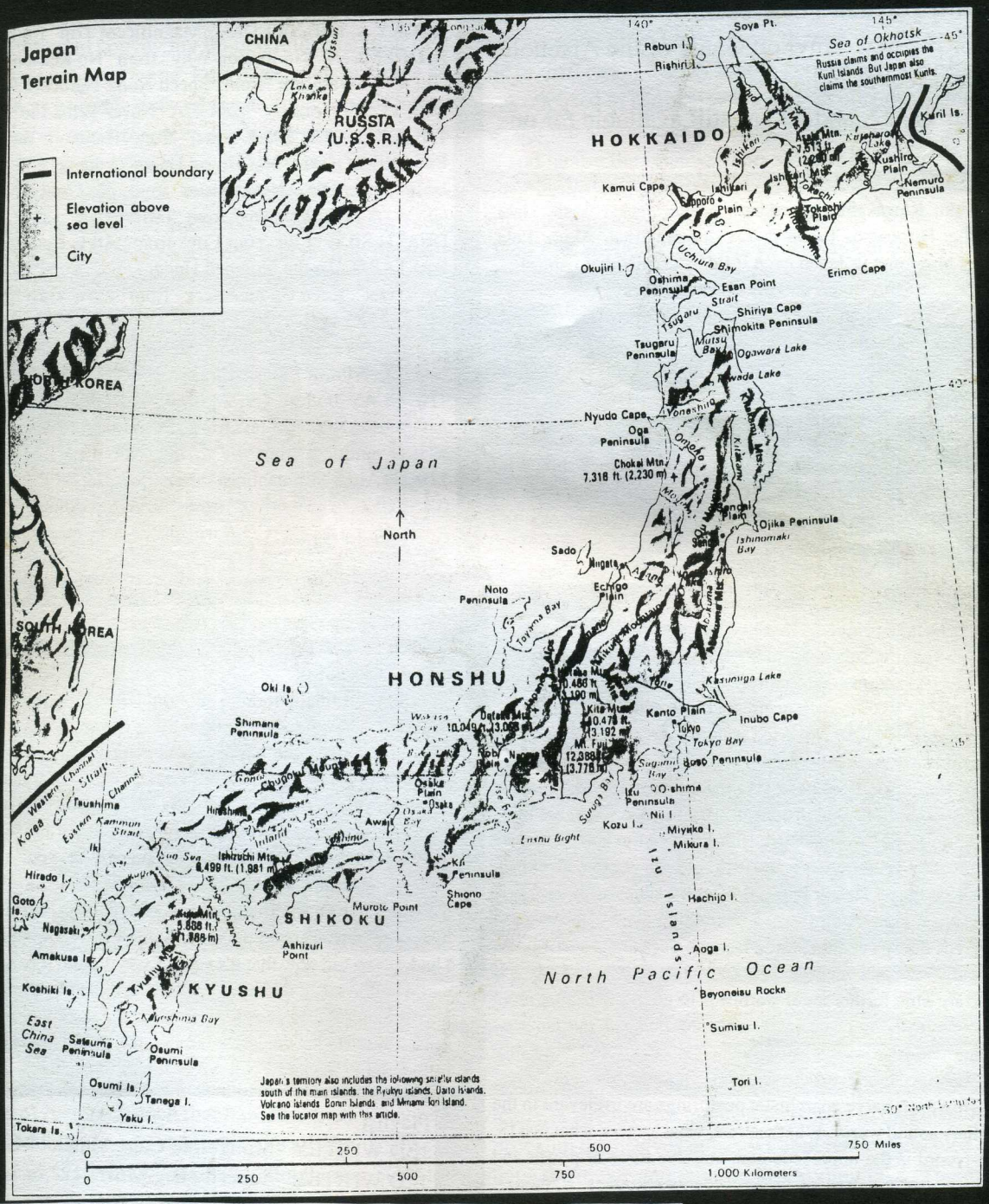

Punk to the bone in Japan

Gauze

Disclose

Japanese raw crust (not hippies)

magazine

Thrash silly

Essentials

☐ Get in touch, punker!
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☐ If you'd like to receive distro updates via e-mail, send a blank to: gameofthearseholes-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

☐ Please be patient when contacting me as I'm very busy, so I can't always reply quickly. But feel free to drop me a friendly reminder if you don't hear back.

☐ Watch out for hot new vinyl on Game of the Arseholes Records in the next few months.

☐ Back issues of #1, #2, and #3 are still available for one stamp.

Special thanks to: Shin, Kawakami, Murakami, Mayu, Jacky, Sash, Habi, Minami, Jhonio, Naoki, Hirotsuna, Takao & Eri, Inoue, Erica, Akira, Lela, Tragedy, and everyone else I met in Japan even if I don't remember names!
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This issue is dedicated to Randy Uchida , Morikawa, and Ignatius.

Though I would generally advise zine editors that their zines should not contain reprints of random crap they find late at night while surfing the web, this review of DISCHARGE "Why" says what needs to be said better than anything else I've read before. I'm sure the original writer of this review—"Dave W"—will never know I've reprinted it, but if he somehow is reading, Thanks!

Forget 'The Clash', 'Damned Damned Damned' or 'Bollocks'. They were far too soporific. THIS is the natural successor to 'Raw Power', and even manages to make parts of that spectral record sound more like Chris de Burgh. My copy of this record has been played so much it is decimated with static. No matter. As soon as the needle hits the first 'music' (inverted commas intentional - jeez, this goes beyond a description as twee as that) there's precious little space for clicks and pops. Buzz. Clang. Feedback. Bass blast. Then sheer, fucking MAYHEM. Eighteen seconds of free-form hell. Bad drum roll. Brief pause. Then the most horrific, devastating, knife-to-gut, mental barre chord riff ever to emerge from a sick Midland mind takes over. Mindless anti-war libretto screamed with a ferocity that begins where Iggy's Death Trip left off. One note vocal 'melody'. One relentless light-speed tempo. Amps turned to sodding twelve, never mind eleven. That desperate riff doesn't change, aside from an occasional sortie a few frets down. One minute 37 seconds later and it's over, just like that. And so is your sanity. But there are nine further aural warheads to go, none lasting more than two minutes, none with any accepted sense of musical harmony or resolution, just constant, unforgiving, catastrophic racket. By the end of the disc you feel as wasted as the monochrome corpses that decorate the sick, sensationalist cover. However, naive anarchistic posturings are irrelevant in the scheme of this incendiary sound world. What matters, what lingers, what just IS, about this incredible record is the unprecedented, massive force of power and volume that takes the worst excesses of its anticedents (Stooges, Ramones, Sabbath) and moulds them into a new and unique, deadly but delicious melee that to this writer constitutes no less than a 'new wave' in itself. Listen to Anthrax, early Metallica, Slayer or Napalm Death and hear how Discharge, epitomised in this mini-LP, proved so epoch-making.

http://www.headheritage.co.uk/unsung/reviews/index.php?review_id=346

After some rather funny discussions I had with some friends about the FORWARD and ROCKY & THE SWEDEN songs listed below, I decided I might as well publish a list of twenty of my favorite Japanese hardcore songs. Often, just one moment of brilliance in a song, such as the solo in "Thrash Thrash Thrash," is enough to cause me to declare a song my favorite. Because I think I'm infallible, I'll say that these are the twenty best hardcore songs from Japan, but unless you're Catholic and I'm the pope, feel free to disagree. I couldn't decide on a Lip Cream song, other than by song title alone ("Bigfoot (He's Chicken Killer)"), so they're not on the list. No order.

FORWARD "Over the Matter of Course" from "While You Alive" 12"
ROCKY & THE SWEDEN "Magnificent Trip" from "THC" 12"
JUDGEMENT "No Reason Why" from "No Reason Why" 7"
GLOOM "Wargasm" from "Speed Noise Hardcore Rags" 7"
DISCLOSE "Tragedy" from V/A "Never Tell a Lie" CD
THE EXECUTE "Black Water" from "Hardcore Temptation" 7"
INSANE YOUTH "Not Give a Damn" from split 7" with Disassociate
DSB "Never Die ~ Never Slave" from "No Fight No Get" 7"
GISM "A.B.C. Weapons" from "Detestation" 12"
DEATH SIDE "Live Your Life" from "All Is Here Now" 7"
BASTARD "To the Stumped Under Dogs" from "Wind of Pain" 12"
DASTON "Keep Up on Attack" from "Plow Through Now" 7"
MUSTANG "[illegible]" from "Groly Obtain" 7"
COMES "Wa-Ka-Me" from "No Side" 12"
GAUZE "Thrash Thrash Thrash" from "Equalizing Distort" 12"
THE CLAY "Future Terror" from V/A "Great Punk Hits" LP
ABURADAKO "Nin-tai" from "s/t" 7" flexi (track A2)
KURO "untitled" from "s/t" 7" flexi '83 (track A1)
THE STALIN "Romanticist" from "Stop Jap" LP
GASTUNK "Devil ~ Sex" from "Devil/Sex/Shout" 7"

If you want a tape or CD-R which has these tracks and a few other classics on it, please get in touch!

GOTA Mailbag (This note made me feel great. It's edited slightly for length)

hey ho! let's go!

Stuart! I finally found you! Originally, I found your zine address on the web, but I never sent you my cheezy letter. I was a fan, a big fanatic of 'Disturbing the Peace' on WVKR. I believe I first heard you blast that crazy swedish thrash in '96 or '97, but I never really got into the music at that time. The final year of the show, '99 - '00, was probably the most influential to me. I was disheartened with the crappy new-school hardcore that was popular. Your show just really blew my mind. At first it was just the crazy underground punk and hardcore I had never heard and then you just knocked me out with the international punk/hardcore scene. The great tidbits and history lessons were so interesting that I stayed up until 2AM every chance I had. It's so sad now that it's gone. Even though it has been a while since the end, I still listen to the tapes I have left of the shows and whatever else I can get my hands on. WVKR will never be the same without you! [...] Anyways, I just wanted to let you know how much I really loved your show. It was very influential to me and I will never forget those times. Thanks. -george

Playlist
JED WHITEY "Mongoloid Cage Match" LP
JED WHITEY "Superfly Big Muff" 12"
STOOGES "s/t" LP
STOOGES "Fun House" LP
FAST CARS "Coming...Ready or Not" LP
DESPERATE BICYCLES "New Cross, New Cross" 7"
DISCHARGE "Hear Nothing, See Nothing, Say Nothing" LP

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

INTRODUCTION

I've been working on this issue of Game of the Arseholes for almost two years. In fact, a lot of what I wrote for it is now so dated that I didn't include it. I won't pretend that I'm any sort of pioneer when it comes to Japanese hardcore. Thanks to the work of a few trailblazers and the ubiquity of the Internet, it is now relatively easy for an American to learn about Japanese hardcore and, as I did, travel to Japan in order to experience the scene firsthand. For me, Japanese hardcore interested me because it was so over-the-top: its imagery, its overdriven music, its attention to detail, its dedication to itself—all aspects of hardcore that we find among the diehards around the world, but which prevail in Japan. Today, however, Japanese hardcore has become trendy, and as soon as something becomes trendy, it loses the sparking originality that caused people to take notice. Luckily, however, I don't think the trendiness of the music will cause it to weaken. The trend is here and the music is there, and, frankly, I doubt most of Japanese bands give a shit if kids in the US are going from flipped-up caps to tattoos of samurai. The main problem I have is that I don't think many Americans understand Japanese hardcore. All they can do is treat it as something that's weird and funny. In this zine, I'm attempting to convey my limited understanding of it, but at the same time, I don't want to treat it anthropologically. This is the punk scene, not a fucking travelogue. I don't treat the Japanese as exotic or different. I did my best to get inside the Japanese raw punk scene in Osaka—as much as possible without the ability to speak Japanese—as opposed to lazily viewing it as an outsider. I think it's easy to go to Japan and marvel at all the differences between our respective scenes, but the similarities are what's important. My advice to the aspiring Japanese hardcore fan in the US is to ignore the trends, ignore the hype, and ignore the reviews. This shit has been here longer than any of us, and it will remain after we're gone. The Japanese are true diehards when it comes to punk. You can't imitate it. Instead, throw out all your notions of what you should do. Be authentic. Do everything yourself without compromise. And, if you want to "sound Japanese," care about nothing as much as you care about hardcore, and do it to the extreme. Don't let anything hold you back. Radical punx never die!

Habi, Jorge, the leader of the fuckin' arseholes, Jacky.

The Line

The dialectic of history is such that hardcore punk's theoretical victory is already forcing its adversaries to disguise themselves as punks. There are now two tendencies in close struggle against us: those who proclaim themselves punks without having any idea what they're talking about and those who, conversely, decide to adopt a few punk ideas minus the music and without mentioning DIY. The increasing likelihood of the confirmation of some of the simplest and least recent of our theses leads many people to use a good part of one or another of them without acknowledging it. We are not, of course, concerned here with obtaining recognition and personal credit for priority. The only interest in pointing out this tendency is in order to denounce one crucial aspect of it: When these people draw on our theses in order to finally speak of some new problem (after having suppressed it for as long as they could), they inevitably banalize it, eradicating its violence and its connection with the general subversion, defusing it and subjecting it to academic dissection or worse. That is the reason they must suppress any reference to DIY.

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

TWO BANDS, ONE ELEVATED STRATA: GAUZE & PAINTBOX

By: Jonas Cacchioni

Here is a report on Gauze and Paintbox written by my friend Jonas Cacchioni, one of the dudes behind Ugly Pop Records. He and another pal, Ted Wong, saw the two bands at two separate shows in Tokyo in October, 2000. My apologies to him for not publishing this until now; I know it's been available on-line for a while. As much as I fancy myself a writer, I think Jonas did an amazing job, and a more original one than I could do, in capturing Gauze, so that's why I'm deferring to his account here. Enjoy!

Gauze. It had been related to me earlier in the day by a Tokyo native that a running rumour/urban legend in that city has it that nary a member of Gauze has ever been witnessed purchasing records in a store, their craft being less inspired by music than by other, less transient and ephemeral 'forces'. While surely overstated, I nodded in agreement, adding this incredible piece of information to the heap of other praises the band demands. The remark bolstered my view of the band as being in essence peerless no matter the criterion of comparison suggested. October 15, 2000 was to be the acid-test of this presumption. Even my father had faxed me the day previous on my birthday to amp me up further, reminding me that THE GAUZE SHOW was to happen on the day following my birthday. Man.

As they appeared on stage, pushing their custom-tweaked gear into place, I could not believe my good fortune. I made offerings to my Asitru Creators. Ha ha. Watching Shin setting up the large floor boom mics that reached to the ceiling forming a secondary canopy of pick-up, I was absorbed in the detail of their set-up, hoping to demystify their sonic slight of hand. Shin in trademark jump-suit, wrap around sunglasses, and white gloves. Each character appearing exactly as suspected, right down to Hiko's bare feet. I would spend the entire set face to face with Shin, two feet back, at eye level given the low stage, on the front-line.

With all the final adjustments made, the band of 40 somethings exploded with a series of all Japanese songs from the most recent XXX lp. The sound was unparalleled in its clarity and richness, with the totality of ambient effects being yarded down by the mics that were stationed 10 feet in the air. As the first notes washed over us, beer came cascading over me from the ranks in the back. Soon the crowd would invade the stage, and the hi-jinks would ensue. All those little black heads violently churning in the mix. Faces being smudged by the flailing Japanese feet above. The band, never letting up, bludgeoning their instruments, went from strength to strength, covering material from their entire career, catapulting the crowd into delusional euphoria. Fists flew in time with their unmatched off-time signature rhythms. Anthemic choruses barked out by all in the know. In essence playing 40 minutes with no breaks. No respite. By far the most professionally administered, all-encompassing slice and dice/smash and run of a hardcore show I have ever witnessed. The spectacle was quite surgical in its administration. And what a spectacle it was!! I often return to the overused notions of 'intensity' or concentrations of 'power', but those ideas seem most apt. While I have always been blown away by their recorded material, and have frequently bandied about those concepts in describing the deliverance that is their expression, in a live environment the dynamic is only exponentially more devastating. If there was ever a hardcore punk band that could set up shop and live on the proverbial ONE, it is Gauze. If I may be permitted to mix my funk and my philosophy, (and who isn't?) the cacophony that is Gauze must be the nearest sensation to approximate the sound of Platonic emanation. Ha ha ha. Moving to the historical, as that divinely-delivered typhoon, the kamikaze, had swept the armies of Mongol invaders to their ruin in 1281, so too did that typhoon wipe from my mind the parade of pretenders to the throne of hardcore punk rock supremacy, forever casting out their memories to sea, leaving only behind the ubiquitous cognizance of THE ONE—GAUZE.

I made my way out of the club into the Tokyo rain, forever an altered man. Ha ha ha. Okay, I'll stop. We spent the next couple of days as we had done before, hangin' out with our Japanese connections, site-seeing, endlessly walking, eating, and slowly being chiseled down by the stresses and strains of that metropolis. After consulting what must've been the tenth person intimately involved in the hardcore scene in Tokyo that could not adequately tell us where Nishiogikubo Watts was, my friend Tetsuya was finally able to get to the bottom of just where Chelsea and Paintbox would be playing. The show ultimately went down at Kichijoji Warp, where I had seen the Japanese screamo band, Anode, some nights earlier, wreak havoc on the place, throwing drums and monitors following their rather impressive set.

Arriving at the club that evening, we knew something was amiss as the venue was over flowing with young, rather straight-laced Japanese highschool girls and college students. We soon learned that this show was being billed "Battlehead", and from what we could determine, the events were to represent some kind of battle of the bands or something. That night we would see a generic Exploited-styled band of kids, a Japanese one-man Duane Eddy/ rockabilly attempt, a group of coifed rockabilly-looking, disco-dancing guys that played power chords and had the crowd of wooing females dancing practiced and conforming manouevres. Ted was particularly intrigued. Oh, yeah, and Paintbox played!?

Earlier, at the entrance to the club we had come across the guys fortifying themselves for the evening with their Asahi and Suntory tall boys. Chelsea, in his 1920's traditional Japanese labouring outfit was more than three sheets to the wind well before he made his sketchy climb to the stage to the crowd of teenage girls. I had my friend Shogo ask the androgynous hippy singer, Mune, who was wearing what can only be described as a mu-mu, if we could take photographs, to which he replied in the negative. Fortunately, after he consulted Chelsea, he returned with thumbs up, so we were stoked. The band broke out with their amazing "Oneside Surprised" from the "Singing, Shouting, Crying" cd, and continued to draw heavily on that recording. The increasing number of punks present all sang from memory, and all was right with the world. I repositioned myself to watch Chelsea mangle his guitar and proceeded to blast off a roll of point blank shots. This guy is quite a piece of work. He must be seen to be believed. In fact, the entire band is one of the more interesting assemblages of individuals to comprise a 'hardcore' band that I have ever seen. As they worked their way through, Chelsea, clearly the admiral of the ship, would consult his quickly deteriorating set list and let the band know which song he was going to embark on next. Ha ha. He would strike out, and in line they would follow, with Suguru and Nakasu, on drums and bass respectively, admirably trying to get to speed with the wailing guitar chops. Solos would abound. Songs from their brand new "Earth Ball Sports Tournament" full-length cd were also demonstrated, absent the interesting synthetic horn parts, to the glee of the diehards. Mune's guttural and phlegmatic barking was of the quality I'd imagined. Surely one of the most distinct and credible voices in Japanese hardcore today. The set was short, lasting only 25 minutes. It came to a crashing end, with Mune throwing his mic to the floor, and Chelsea pitching his guitar into a state of feedback, with the entire band quickly exiting the building through the heart of the crowd. Wicked stuff. We would later find them resuming that very Japanese task of public imbibing, where we gave them the thumbs up, congratulated them, and went about our merry, sated way to catch one of the later trains for Shinjuku. In the end, I understood that I had been privy to the greats, and while so many of Japan's retro-thrash, 'fastcore', and d-beat thrashing outfits get it done, it was clear to me that Paintbox, as Gauze had demonstrated before, inhabit entirely more elevated strata.

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It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

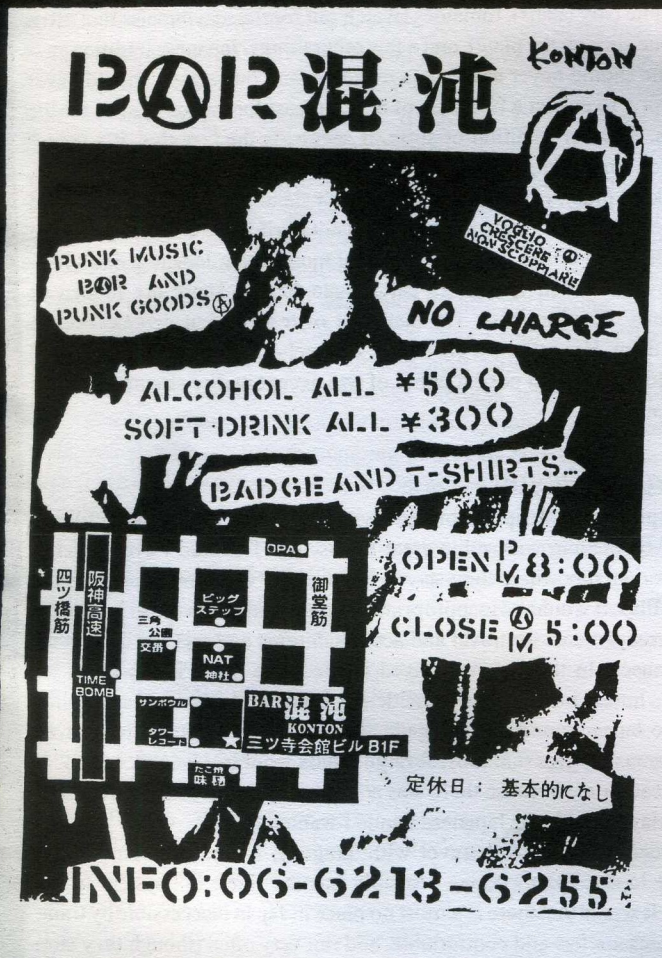
Final Noise Attack

Some of the kindest, friendliest people I've met in the punk scene are in Osaka, where the crust scene is quite strong. The first thing I should note is that in Japan, "crust" refers to a style of dress as well as a style of music, but it definitely does not imply the sparechanging, dirty, degenerate drug addicts we know as "crust" in America. The Osaka crusties are excited about raw, noisy hardcore in the Antisect/Discharge/Scandinavian vein as well as the traditional Japanese hardcore greats. It was refreshing for me to be around punk rockers as excited about Lama or Confuse as I am.

Even though GLOOM have broken up, they remain the most important Osaka crust band. Many of the people currently active in the scene were inspired by GLOOM, whose slogan "Friendly and Violence" sums up their great attitude: it means that their gigs were always energetic and wild but friendly and unified. Now, drummer Habi and bassist Jhonio play in DEFECTOR and together with Jacky (who helped as a guitarist in GLOOM's last years), they run Crust War Records and zine. Additionally, Habi owns the small Bar Konton which is certainly the best bar I've ever been to. The Osaka crusties seemed to me to be like an extended family and Konton was almost like a collective in that everyone works together to support the bar and spend loud nights! Shin Takayama, who drums in FRAMTID, was my exceptionally kind host in Osaka and he took me to Konton each night where I was instantly welcomed. With the Osaka crusties, and Minami from POIKKEUS bartending, we watched rare old hardcore videos, listened to the classics, from Comes to Crück, Anti-Cimex to Appendix, and discussed many old and new hardcore bands both Japanese and foreign.

Jacky, whose English is perfect, taught me something very important about Japanese hardcore: as we know, many Japanese bands have lyrics about struggling and fighting against something, but that something is usually not specified because for most Japanese punks, the struggle is an internal one. The punks must struggle against themselves to remain outside a society that leaves little room at the margins compared to Europe or America. Here in America, punk bands always sing about struggling against society, but I find it quite interesting that the Japanese see this struggle to stay opposed, stay punk, and stay independent as an internal struggle rather than an external one. For the Japanese, it's taboo to say that one is bored of punk rock because it implies a failure of the subject who is feeling this way, rather than a failure of the music or the scene. Perhaps if American punks thought more along these lines, we'd have many more thirty-something punks as I saw in Japan. Another aspect of Japanese punk that I noticed was that the punks there are extremely dedicated to one style of punk. Of course I love raw hardcore the most, but any given day sees me listening to other styles of music (gasp!) from '77 punk to the occasional glam rock in addition to the usual raw '80s suspects. In fact, I would go as far as to say that my friends, whom I consider to be true punks here in America, all have diverse tastes, while in Japan, the truest punks have a very narrow, but concentrated focus on their small corner of the scene.

Bar Konton's atmosphere was totally relaxed and fun, without pretense, sleaziness, or machismo—exactly how I wish bars were in NYC. If in Osaka, I insist that you go to Konton. It's easy to find (it's in the basement of a 4+ story building that is all small, one-room bars!) and it also has a great selection of band t-shirts. I can't wait until I have a chance to go back there. Too bad there aren't any direct flights from Whippany to Konton.



"To be young again..." Jorge and Jacky

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

Do you wanna be my dog.g.g!?

Anyone expecting to walk into Japanese record stores and trip over boxes of CLAY 7"s and G-ZET 12"s will be severely disappointed. Overall, prices are high and everyone knows that you really really can't live without COMES "No Side." But, on the other hand, most of the classics are not nearly as rare, based on the size of the pressings, as the prices they command on eBay might lead one to believe. Certain records are exceptionally rare, and if you're like me and ask about them in every record store, you'll get laughing replies in varying degress of snideness. Some shop owners are probably still shaking their heads at the white dude who was trying to find an EXECUTE flexi. My recommendation is, if you seek bargains, don't go looking for them in Tokyo, especially not in the punk shops. The best deals are to be found in the metal shops or in the non-specialty record shops in the smaller cities. Whereas you can count on finding some classic rarities for the "going" rate in stores like Allman, Nat, Timebomb, or Circledelic, the lesser stores off the beaten path have the real surprises. The obscurities are in the non-punks stores. For instance, in random stores in Osaka, I found copies of the REBEL flexi, the POISONOUS CROSS GIBBET 8" flexi, several lesser ADK releases, and so on for very low prices. If you have unlimited funds, Flower in Tokyo has stuff that is impossible to find, but the prices are quite high, same for Erector in Tokyo. Both these stores are not easy to find, but any local should be able to show you how to find them. I'm really glad I did go to both these stores, because the owners were quite nice to me and extremely knowledgeable, though their English is limited. Flower is the most crowded store I've ever seen: scores of records are in bags tacked to the ceiling! The stores you've likely heard of, like Allman, Boy, Base, Nat (which has two stores on one floor—one for crust and one for everything else!), Disk Union, etc, in Tokyo and Timebomb and Nat in Osaka are fairly easy to find. I think Nat in Osaka was the best overall for selection and prices of both Japanese and foreign records, new and second-hand.

A few years ago, before the Internet and the collecting explosion, I think it was much easier to find Japanese punk/hc rarities, but like the rest of the world, the market there has tightened and the prices have drastically increased. If you want to buy foreign records, you can find just about anything in Japan, but be prepared to pay ridiculous prices. I saw records for sale on the wall in some stores I've never even seen in person before, but I think they're going to remain on the wall for some time due to the asking prices. In Answer Records in Nagoya, which has a reputation for being one of the best stores in Japan, I saw such rarities as the "Hoosier Hysteria" split LP, Public Disturbance LP, Cheifs 7", Machines 7", Germs "Lexicon Devil" 7" and so on, but the store, for some odd reason, had no Japanese rarities. Raw Power, a store in Tokyo, is the craziest store I've ever seen. Take the highest eBay prices you've ever seen and double or triple them and you have the price tags for some records in this store. Bargain bin stuff from the US was 7500 yen and ultra-rarities were in the high 6 figure (yen) range. The top row of the wall in this store had, get this: Freestone, Chosen Few, Bobby Soxx, Peer Pressure, Incredible Kidda Band "Everybody Knows" with p/s!!, Dogs "Slash Your Face", Stimulators "Loud! Fast! Rules!", FX "South's Going to Rise Again", Lost Kids 1st, and the Moderns "Got to Have Pop". Fucking crazy!! I'm not sure I know any collectors in the world who have all those in their homes. But as I said, the prices were similar to that old Monty Python skit about the joke that made people die laughing.

My best finds were a few records I'd never heard of before that have turned out to be great like the GEWALT 7" picture disc. But the find of the trip had to be the GLOOM "Speed Noise Hardcore Rags" 7" first press on Crust War for <400 yen, as well as a few other tasty items that you'll have to contact me personally to hear about.

Dusty bitch, give me cold meat

Vegans travelling in Japan should be prepared for some difficulty. First of all, I didn't meet a single punk who was vegan. Second, Japanese cooking is centered around fish. Almost everything has some fish in it, so even if you order something you think is vegan, it might have fish flakes or some other similar suprise sprinkled on top. Not only do I not eat meat, but I'm allergic to fish, so I had to be cautious and vigilant. I didn't want to puke all over someone's record collection, so I had to be sure to avoid secret fish. It is, however, easy to avoid dairy in Japan because traditional Japanese cooking doesn't seem to have milk or cheese (Did I mention that I'm lactose intolerant?). As in most cities, Tokyo had a lot of foreign-cuisine restaurants. I ate Italian and Indian food, both of which were vegetarian. Of course, to be sure, one should always say "vegetarian" in Japanese—the Japanese equivalent sounds very much like the English word. It's also a good idea to figure out what you can eat in convenience stores and supermarkets. There's a lot of fruit available everywhere, but it's expensive and generally, it seemed to look better than it tasted. In convenience stores, one can always find something called "Inari" which is rice wrapped in tofu skin. This quickly became my favorite Japanese food. It comes in packages of three or six usually. There are also triangles of rice wrapped in seaweed that Yannick from Tragedy was nutso about, but be careful because sometimes they have non-vegan surprises in the middle of them. One thing to note is that a lot of the bread in the convenience stores isn't vegan because it comes pre-packed with mayonnaise inside. In fact, I saw one ghastly loaf that had a weiner, mayonnaise and corn kernels in it—and it wasn't even refrigerated! Barf-o-rama.

The noodle shops are excellent and cheap, but I wouldn't recommend trying to communicate that you don't want broth (which has fish juice) on your noodles unless you speak Japanese. My solution was to eat noodles only when with a Japanese friend. In other restaurants, I was able to eat tofu (again, have a Japanese friend tell the server to leave the fish flakes in the kitchen), french fries ("fried-uh po-ta-to" in Japanese), corn, edamame (soy beans), tomatoes (watch out for the mayonnaise that often tops one slice on the plate), and a few other things. Japanese tradition says that one should never pour one's own beer and one's glass should never be empty, so expect a full glass of beer, at least for the toast, even for the edgers. Another tradition of sorts, it seems, is the "try this, it's gross" tradition. In Osaka, at Bar Konton, Shin insisted that I try an umeboshi, or pickled plum, even though he couldn't stand to eat one himself. I did eat one and it's very salty and bitter, but not terrible. Traditionally, they're used in mixed drinks. Another food that most young Japanese don't like, but love to watch foreigners eat is nato beans. These are fermented soybeans. They're gross. Try them out of respect, but don't expect to enjoy them. Honestly, I'd eat a plate of umeboshi before a plate of nato, but I think I'd rather not eat either of two except in dire circumstances or for a laugh.

But after the gig

I planned my trip to coincide with Tragedy's tour because I knew they'd be playing with some great bands. But I couldn't ever travel in their van or stay where they stayed because the vans and houses are too small. Plus, it would be inappropriate to impose in that way, so I made my own arrangements for travel and accomodations and met the band at the live houses. In the end, we stayed in the same place in Kochi, at Mr Inoue's house, but that was coincidence. I would recommend scheduling a trip to Japan around gigs. Tragedy are quite big in Japan, so they played some amazing gigs that most foreign bands wouldn't be able to play. It was great for me because there was an American band who are friends of mine playing with the Japanese bands I wanted to see.

Because I couldn't travel with Tragedy, I used the trains to get around Japan. I think Japan probably has the finest rail system in the world. It seems that there is almost no place in Japan inaccessible by train. The trains are fast and comfortable, and run very often (though they stop running around midnight) but they're expensive. Anyone planning to travel between a few cities over a week or more should definitely purchase

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

a Japan Rail (JR) pass. These passes are available only to tourists and must be purchased in one's home country prior to travel. They come in one-, two- or three-week lengths. While the passes are not cheap (for two weeks, my pass was around $375), they are much cheaper than buying the individual tickets since a Shinkansen (bullet train) ticket between Tokyo and Osaka is probably $150 or more. In Tokyo, the train signage is almost all bi-lingual, but outside Tokyo, the amount of English translations decreases drastically. Luckily, the Shinkansen's announcements are all bilingual. I must say that the Shinkansen was a pleasurable experience. Even though Americans are generally taller than Japanese, there was more legroom on on the Shinkansen than on any American train. The ride was smooth and quiet (unlike the commuter trains I ride daily here). And, call me old-fashioned, but I was very impressed by the respectfulness of the staff. The conductors wear white gloves and bow upon entering and exiting a train car. They're rather different from their lackadaisical American counterparts. Otto from Selfish had recommended that I hitch-hike around Japan, but I was chicken. If you're tougher than I am, or speak more Japanese, of course this would be the most economical way to travel.

Shows cost a lot in Japan (around $20) because it's very expensive to run a live house in the ultra-cramped cities. I hate the way that so-called punks in the US often complain about record prices or entrance fees to shows. If you care about punk, what's wrong with using your money to support it? Records and tours sure as hell aren't cheap to produce. Anyway, advance tickets are always a good idea because they tend to be cheaper, and if you're planning to see a big band such as Gauze, the show might sell out if you wait to buy a ticket at the door. Additionally, one must buy a drink ticket with door entry. If you consider it a separate fee, it seems strange, but if you think about it as a free drink with your entry fee, then it's pretty cool. Furthermore, I don't see how anyone could possibly complain about the door price for seeing some of the best bands in the world. Frankly, if you're cheap, and you're going to complain about how much stuff costs, don't go to Japan. Hop a train to Portland instead. My stolen mantra for all things punk is "It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it."—except for travelling to Japan. Ha ha.

Gigs feel somewhat different in Japan from the US, but I don't think it's useful for me to enumerate the differences I observed. If you're really interested in the differences, go to Japan and check out some bands for yourself. One funny thing is that unlike in the US, where it's considered uncool, in Japan, people tend to wear shirts of the band playing, and band members often wear their own shirts. One thing I would say is that you should be cautious about taking photos without permission. If you see a young band, it's probably OK to take pictures without asking for permission, but if you go to see one of the old, traditional Tokyo hardcore bands, you should ask before snapping photos or else you might find yourself in a difficult situation. And as cool as it might be to see members of bands from "Thrash til Death" hanging out on the street, I wouldn't recommend taking photos without permission. I've seen tourists getting their asses kicked on St Mark's Place for taking photos of punks, so don't think that, as an American punk rocker, you're not still a tourist to the Japanese punks. Japanese society is extremely conscious of what is and is not socially acceptable, so Americans will probably find themselves breaking taboos all the time since we have so few taboos of our own. In general, I think the Japanese punks, especially the crust scene, are very easygoing, but it goes without saying that one should be mindful of other cultures' traditions when visiting. Duh.

Traditionally, after a gig, there is a big party in which all the bands go to a traditional Japanese restaurant for food and drinks. This party is called "utiage." I don't think that all foreign bands get invited to utiages, but Tragedy said that there was one every night on this tour. If you're not in a band, don't expect to go to the utiage unless you have some connection. I was able to go to two because I was staying with people who were in Japanese bands. Everyone pays a flat rate upon arrival and everyone shares the food. This is a good place to learn about Japanese food and culture. I had a great time at the utiages. Not only did I meet a lot of Japanese punks, but we had great conversations. Of course, "I love Discharge" and "Lip Cream are the best band ever" were frequent comments made to me. Everyone gets somewhat drunk and some get really drunk at the utiage. I found that the Japanese punks were interested in talking about my perceptions of Japanese culture and, most of all, my interest in Japanese punk (expect to list your favorite Japanese bands and records often!), but we also discussed things like terrorism and the World Trade Center attack as well as Nietzsche and Goethe!

Life is only once

Though all generalizations are inaccurate, some stereotypes contain elements of truth, so a visitor to Japan can expect to see the expected: funny broken english, crowded cities, efficient trains, and technological gadgetry. Japanese society is quite different from American society, but it is still an ultra-modern, fully integrated capitalist society, so it ain't that different. Based on what I'd heard, I expected Tokyo to be a futuristic city like one in a movie such as *Blade Runner*, but I was far from shocked by the megapolis. Perhaps I'm quite jaded from working in Manhattan and being there almost every day, but I was unimpressed by the size, speed, population density, and advertising saturation in Tokyo. It was no worse than NYC, which is to say it was pretty disgusting, but not surprisingly so. Just outside the enormous Shinjuku station, to the northwest, was the largest crosswalk I've ever seen: at least a hundred feet wide (whereas crosswalks in Manhattan, especially in the most crowded areas near Penn Station, for instance, are no more than twelve feet wide). What can I say: my strongest memory is of a crosswalk!

Nearly everyone in Japan, at least in the cities, rides a bicycle. It's the only way to get around the crowded, narrow streets from train station to home. It was nice to know that so many people use public transportation (see above) and so many ride bikes—perhaps this is the greatest difference between America and Japan! One of the greatest things I saw, which lead me to believe that Japan possesses the superior culture, was a multi-level parking garage for bicycles! That's great. Outside this parking garage, I saw a young girl with a baseball cap that had a solar-powered fan built into the brim. As if Gauze weren't proof enough that Japan is superior to the US!

As far as broken english goes, it's hard to top all the phrases we know and love from punk songs, but I have to mention one t-shirt I saw on a normal-looking kid. It said: "Extreme Robots Terror." What that means is anyone's guess, but I wish I had that shirt myself.

Finally, on my first full day of Tokyo, I realized that I was in a country I could truly appreciate when I went into Allman Recordshop and saw that they had an entire section in the 7" bins dedicated to DISCLOSE records. That's a cultural difference I wish I could've brought home.

My overall advice to anyone who visits Japan is this, there are a few essentials you will need: patience, friendliness, strong observational skills (both to communicate and to appreciate the subtleties of Japanese culture), and a good sense of direction/map-reading skills.

Assault

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

Anode / DSB / Rocky & the Sweden / Gauze / Tragedy. July 13, 2002 Shinjuku Antiknock

What I want from a hardcore gig is exactly what I can't count on: unpredictability. The best gigs are the ones when the unexpected happens. Maybe a band I have never heard before rips it up or maybe I meet someone new who is really cool. My fondest memories of gigs tend to be experiences like these, or else they are gigs where everyone more-or-less knows each other and we spend a loud night together as friends, supportive and encouraging toward each other.

So how do I come to terms with the gig I saw in Tokyo: DSB, Rocky & the Sweden, Tragedy and Gauze? Certainly, I didn't know exactly what would happen at this gig, but I knew that it would be the best show I'd ever seen. How could it be anything but that? It seemed to me inevitable that someday I would see Gauze and they would be the most intense thrash experience of my life. For years I'd been waiting for this day. As if seeing Gauze weren't enough in itself, DSB—probably my favorite current Japanese hc band—were playing as well, and so were Rocky & the Sweden, another band I've followed as long as they've been around and whom I really love. In many ways, it was too good to be true. But the level of predictability causes me to speak in clichés, and actually, I've had a lot of trouble writing down an account of this show.

The only aspect of the show that prevents me from saying that it was the best show of my life is that it was unfamiliar. It was my first show in Japan, and other than Tragedy, I knew only one person at the show (my friend Mayu, who was kind enough to accompany me). Essentially, since I began going to shows at ABC No Rio, shows for me have always been, at least in part, social events. When I talk about the near-riots of 9 Shocks Terror shows, part of the fun is always that it's me and a group of people, most of whom I consider good friends, being psychopaths together. Even when I go to shows in faraway parts of the US, I'm almost always comfortable at DIY shows. So it was a different experience for me to be at a show I knew would be great, but where I didn't feel like I was sharing my enjoyment of it with my friends. It was abundantly clear that everyone was extremely psyched to be at this show, but because of the language barrier, I didn't feel like I could exactly share this enjoyment with them. In some ways, because I felt like I was observing more than participating, I felt like I was a young punker again, at one of my first shows. This was a welcome sensation because I have extremely fond recollections of early shows when I didn't know what the fuck was going on, but where I was paying close attention to everything that happened in an effort to understand and internalize the punk scene. So, in a way, Gauze made me feel like a kid again—too bad they didn't play "Children Fuck Off."

So, now that I got my feelings out of the way, here are the facts:

As the crowd lined up outside the Shinjuku Antiknock, I noticed that most of the kids were dressed fairly normally and that the kids were also fairly young. Once inside, I realized that the GAUZE show was not the place to see the really traditional, old-school Tokyo hardcore crowd. I was hoping to see thirty to forty year-olds with huge mohawks and studded jackets with G-ZET logos on them. From what Todd told me, this crowd was in effect at the gig they played earlier in the tour with PAINTBOX. Nonetheless, there were a few Tokyo hardcore superstars at the gig (besides GAUZE themselves). Not only was the crowd young, it was a huge crowd in a small show space. I think this was the most crowded show I've ever seen and other than the infamous OI POLLOI show at the Inferno a few years ago, this was the hottest show I've ever had the pleasure of sweating through.

Similar to other legendary show spaces like CBGB, the Antiknock had a gritty, this-building-has-seen-it-all feel to it. Also like CBs, the music played between bands sucked! Ha ha. To enter, one walks down a right-angled flight of stairs, and at the bottom, the merch tables await. I made a beeline for the DSB table where an extremely kind punker helped me break the bank on DSB badges, patches and stickers for all my friends back home. I asked Mayu to tell the guy that DSB are my favorite band and before she could translate, he enthusiastically thanked me. While such a conversation with a band in the US is the most mundane, and often meaningless, exchange, for me to be able to express the most basic reason for being thousands of miles from home among people with whom I can barely communicate—for me, this exchange was both fulfilling and meaningful. Barriers to communication, as I realized time and time again in Japan, break so quickly in the punk scene because we share something so essential and honest that the usual cross-cultural interlocutors of our modern era so profoundly lack.

I met up with TRAGEDY inside and immediately got the "What records did you get so far?" treatment. I fired back the same question. They pointed out some people whom I needed to notice, and also pointed out that I had better buy a GAUZE shirt before they ran out. I bought four.

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

DSB were the second band, but I'm not going to talk about ANODE. Let me first say that DSB's guitarist has the best punk rock fashion sense I've seen since '95, when the NYC streetpunk scene was at its peak. We're talking about a white leather jacket, black leather pants, green Docs, big charged hair, sunglasses—the works. The bassist had a big ol' floppy 'hawk, too. I'd be lying if I didn't say that punk fashion helped get me into punk, so it was so amazing to see a band I love today looking punk as fuck. DSB began their set with a song I didn't recognize, which seemed a bit like a warm-up. Their second song, though, was "Answer," the first track on "Wings" and the crowd went nuts. As is the case with nearly every band I've ever seen, the more excited the crowd is, the more energy the band puts into their show. At this point, the band was exploding with energy. The singer was jumping up onto the monitors, the guitarist and bassist were running back and forth across the stage, jumping and swinging their instruments with reckless abandon. They were moving around so much that, at times, they couldn't possibly have been actually playing their instruments. Guitars swung behind heads while a guitarist is jumping off the kickdrum are not guitars being carefully played. Needless to say, despite the mayhem, the band was, to my ears, flawlessly tight. The crowd was psyched. Fists pumped and choruses shouted! Stagedives and smiles! The last three songs were "Humanity," "Survive," and "Freedom." The first is one of my favorite DSB songs, so I was stoked. Air guitars and pumped fists galore. A madman I was. And then two more sick songs! Except for a slightly odd and annoying echo effect on the vocals, the set was better than I could've imagined. The kids loved it and DSB looked like they were having an amazing time themselves. Of course, TRAGEDY, being the curmudgeons they are, said they'd seen DSB play better before, but for me, this set was enough to ensure that I will continue to place DSB at the top of my list. Please, please, please, DSB, come to the US. I'll bring a mob of radical punx with me to every show.

ROCKY & THE SWEDEN were next. I must say that I both hoped and expected to see the band passing around a bong, MURPHY'S LAW style, during their set, but they were no-nonsense, just fuckin' rock. The drummer had such a big smile on his face all the way through the set, I don't think there's any place he'd rather have been. The guitarist, complete with *sick* traditional Japanese tattoos and Flying V, was a surgeon on the guitar, utterly precise and mistake-free. I don't think the crowd was as psyched to see R&S, but they sounded amazing—the guitar sound alone was enough to make me cry out "Thank God for Marshall!" Though it seems that marijuana imagery is extremely popular in Japan as imagery and fashion more than as an accessory to an actual lifestyle, I must say that the bassist of R&S looked like he'd just walked off the set of the latest Cheech & Chong feature. The band played most of the classics, but like DSB, didn't play any of the songs off their first 7". Nevertheless, they did play "Magnificent Trip," which is my favorite song of theirs. There I was, fist in the air, singing along, "Open Eyes / Look Up At / Sky High / Feel Alive!" Feel alive indeed. I should also mention that DSB's singer was on the side of the stage, enthusiastically shouting every single word. Awesome!

I'm not going to say much about their show because I think you should read what my friend Jonas wrote about a GAUZE gig a couple years ago since it captures everything quite well. But here's a little bit to set the scene: Before R&S even took the stage, Shin of GAUZE was warming up backstage by running through the songs on his bass. Yet, let me say that if any US band were as serious about playing hardcore for twenty-plus years as GAUZE, it probably still would be impossible to match the perfection of this band. I believe that GAUZE, more than anything else in life, inspire belief in the supernatural or at least in that which cannot be explained rationally. Hardcore lives inside these four men. Everything they do as GAUZE is an expression of the form in its purest. As Jonas indicates, they have no need for current records or bands because they are Hardcore, they are the Platonic form of hardcore, its perfection. They work hard to achieve this, but, like all masters, I do think that it is something more than longevity and practice that has caused them to produce music that is to hardcore as Leonardo is to painting or Shakespeare to writing. Live, their sound is faster and more intense than on vinyl, just plain better all around—hard to believe, I know. In a country where amazing guitar sounds, flawless playing, and intense live shows are the rule, GAUZE are still exceptional because they corral these aspects and supersede them. They are the next level after amazing!

TRAGEDY said to me that playing after GAUZE meant they had to throw out any worries about playing poorly or playing well because no matter how they played, they could never match the band that preceded them. Their zen-like attitude, though, allowed them to play superbly. After a couple songs from the first record, they played the songs on the 7" and I was floored. This band is the most intense band in America and they were quite capable of competing with the Japanese bands in intensity. I was quite impressed. Fist in the air, drenched in sweat, shouting along, about to pass out because it was so hot, nowhere a better place to be. I live for this.

It was easy.

It was cheap.

Go and do it.

RÄW SHIT

I don't know how to introduce this piece except to say that it's an incomplete list of Japanese raw, noisy, UK- and Scandi-influenced hardcore bands. I apologize in advance if anything I've written is inaccurate. I think that some of the most exciting hardcore coming out right now is in the Japanese raw crust scene, where the bands now will not settle for thing or muddy recordings and where they tend to put on aggressive, high-energy gigs. There hasn't been this much great raw punk coming out since '83-'84 in Finland and Sweden. One thing to note is that almost all Japanese crust bands release demo tapes before vinyl (sometimes limited to as few as ten copies) and almost none of the bands release compact discs. Jhonio, the godfather of the Osaka crust scene, said that if you don't have a record player, you aren't punk. Amen!

DISCLOSE, from Kochi, are probably the most important band for me to talk about because they're my favorite. People who have heard only their mid-period split 7"s probably don't realize how amazing this band is. All the releases in the last four years have great, powerful but raw recording unlike the blurry noise that marked some of those splits or the picture disc on Distortion. DISCLOSE have been around for over 10 years, and Kawakami (guitarist/vocalist/founding member) is one of the biggest supporters of both the Japanese and the worldwide raw hardcore punk scenes. Of course, DISCLOSE have a heavy Discharge influence, but they have their own raw and noisy sound which is influenced by more than just Discharge (note their entire 10" of Swedish hardcore covers). As Kawakami told me, the band has the spirit of Bones, Tezz, Bambi, Rainy, and Cal inside them. They've internalized the way Discharge played, it's become habitual, so that their music will always have a Discharge element to it, but it can't accurately be considered mere imitation because they're not just copying riffs. The current line-up is probably their best so be sure to pick up all their releases in the future. I especially love the "Nightmare or Reality" 12" from '99, split 7" w/ SQUANDERED from '98 and "Aspects of War" 10" from '98. The recent 7", "A Mass of Raw Sound Assault," is Kawakami's favorite DISCLOSE release. By the time you read this, the "Apocalypse of Death" 12" will be released on Dan-Doh. Kawakami calls the style of this record "Dis-Bones." As the early records were deeply Scandi-influenced (Kawakami says the "Tragedy" LP is "too Swedish"), and the last few releases realize the essence of Discharge's style, this record combines early Broken Bones and "Hear Nothing" for a brutal, Dis-riff attack. I think it's DISCLOSE'S most memorable record because the tracks are true songs, but I'm sure some purists won't like it because it's certainly the least Scandinavian of their records. As I've written elsewhere in this issue, DISCLOSE must be heard live to be believed. The insane, make-your-hair-fall-out distortion on the guitar is absolutely perfect. I loved it! In many ways, because they are so over-the-top, DISCLOSE exemplify what I love about hardcore.

Before I continue with current and recent bands, I might as well mention CROW and THE CLAY, the two bands from the early '80s who played total Discharge-style Japanese hardcore. Furthermore, DISCLOSE covered THE SEXUAL, who had one total Dis-attack on the "Jisatu Omnibus" 8", as well as several other awesome raw, traditional Japanese hardcore songs on their flexis (now compiled on CD). And finally, GJPB were, according to Habi from Gloom, Japan's first d-beat band, and COLLAPSE SOCIETY were the second (after taking GJPB's influence).

Along with DISCLOSE, one of the first Swedish-style hardcore bands from Japan was FRIGÖRA from Kanagawa. FRIGÖRA were probably the first Japanese band to take the Swedish influence to the next level by writing lyrics and song titles all in Swedish (I think they got a lot of help from Diskonto). The Mob 47 / SOD / Anti-Cimex influence on this band is obviously huge. They released a 7", an LP called "Dance of the Plague Bearer" and a split 7" w/ Diskonto. In late 2001, two sub-legit LP's came out, one of which compiles the demo, the 7" and split 7" and the other has a live set from '95 which includes several Mob 47 and Crudity covers. The drumming on their releases is hyper-chaotic.

It was easy.

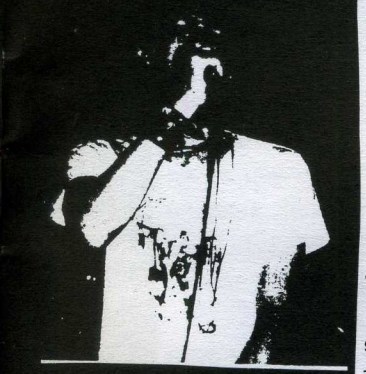
It was cheap.

Go and do it.

GLOOM, from Osaka, were an infamous long-running chaotic noise unit and, after going to Osaka, I realize, they were probably the most important band to the Japanese crust scene. Taking their influence from Confuse, Disorder, Vorkriegsphase as well as Scandinavian bands, GLOOM upped the ante for noise-drenched crust warfare. Their slogans, like "crasher crusties" and "noise for moblish" are cool and memorable in my opinion . Those who never experienced GLOOM while the band was alive probably won't realize that they were never an overly serious band: the members were always joking and laughing while still managing to play brutal noisecrust. Osaka is known as the city in Japan with the best sense of humor, and I think GLOOM exemplified this half-true stereotype with their fun-loving attitufe. Together from '89 to 2001, they released two 7"s, a 12" and a live 12"—not much, but the world took notice of their deafening distortion. If you can, you should check out the video on MCR called "All Crusties Spending Loud Night" which has some awesome footage of GLOOM acting like crasher crusties, as well as DISCLOSE, CROCODILE SKINK, and LIFE. The first GLOOM 7" has one of my favorite noisy hardcore songs ever, called "Wargasm," GLOOM were extremely well-loved by their Japanese fans for a good reason, and they inspired so many of the current crust bands.

Crust War zine is incredibly important to the Japanese raw punk scene because the zine covers every single band that comes out. Jacky and Jhonio from GLOOM also have interviews with relevant bands new and old from Atrocious Madness to Onslaught in #7 (newsflash: #8 just came out). Jacky also plays guitar in FRAMTID, one of the best and most active bands in this scene, who are gaining international recognition.

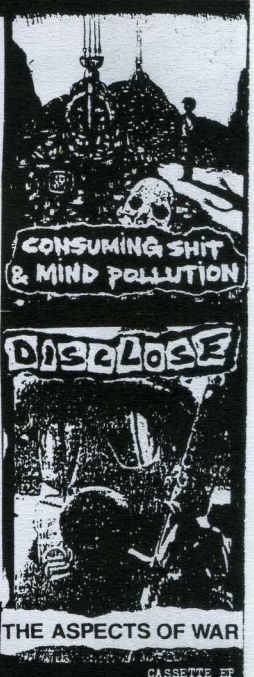
FRAMTID have released one 7" and are about to release a new 12". The 7" was pressed twice on Crust War Records and it was recently repressed, with new sleeve art, on Holland's Wicked Witch Records. As you might guess from their name, which means "future" in Norwegian, their sound is intense Scandinavian-style raw punk. Drummer Shin is an amazingly fast and chaotic drummer, and he also supplies me with most of my information about the Japanese scene (and he was an excellent host when I visited Osaka!), so much love and respect goes to him and FRAMTID. They've recently recorded a demo tape, called "Consuming Shit and Mind Pollution," which includes songs that will appear on the next release. The band was somewhat unhappy with the recording, so they have re-recorded the tracks for the vinyl release. FRAMTID are strictly DIY and underground, and the members' support of the raw crust scene in Japan helps maintain it as the true Japanese hardcore underground. I encourage everyone to track down all FRAMTID material.



Laukaus

One current band that will be one to watch is LAUKAUS, from Kobe-City, who sing in Finnish. They have one 5-song raw-ass demo of Finnish-style mayhem which sounds a lot like Kansan Uutiset. Two members came from the Abrasive Wheels-sounding REBEL YOUTH. The other two members aren't permanent, but one plays in ARGUE DAMNATION, who also deserve a mention as Japan's most overtly political anarchist raw punk band (for them, unlike the rest of the bands in this article, the emphasis is on the politics over the thrash). Check LAUKAUS' webpage, where you can listen to a demo track: www.geocities.co.jp/Hollywood-Kouen/3242/. The first LAUKAUS 7" will come out on my friend's label, Distort Records, from New Jersey, so keep your eyes peeled.

A new band from Osaka, called POIKKEUS, coincidentally began around the same time as LAUKAUS and also play chaotic, Finn-style thrash sung in Finnish. There is a joking rivalry between the bands that came up when I mentioned that I was friends with Naoki from LAUKAUS in Bar Konton, where POIKKEUS drummer Minami tends bar. I think each band claims the other is a copycat. Ha! POIKKEUS better hurry up and release some vinyl before someone bootlegs a rehearsal tape.



It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

After FRAMTID and DISCLOSE, one of the most integral bands in the raw hardcore scene is LIFE who are from Tokyo. LIFE have been around for several years and have released two 7"s, "Freedom and Liberation" and "Master of Darkness," and one LP, "The World Lies Across Them." Their sound is distortion-laden thrash influenced by the late '80s UK stench-core scene. LIFE, however, are quite wild and fast without being metallic. The new 7" (Master of Darkness) has awesome apocalyptic artwork and an amazing guitar sound and intricate playing. The bassist, Abe, runs Punk Bastard Records which released their three records.

Another band which sings in Finnish (and English...and I think one song might be Swedish) is ÄPÄRÄT. No, not the Finnish one, nor the Swedish one—this is one is guaranteed Japanese. They're on a split 7" with EFFIGY (who are on the Amebix tip) which was released on Forest Records. This record actually had decent distribution in the US, so you should be able to find it easily (dig the spine on the sleeve). ÄPÄRÄT play noisy d-beat thrash somewhere between a faster BASTARDS and LIFE.

PERSEVERE blew me away with their riffy blitzkrieg on the amazing "Sabotage 2001" compilation LP. This LP features spiky-haired bands, but emphasizes the faster, rawer edge instead of the pogo side of things. It's limited to 500, so you should seek it out now before it's impossible to find. PERSEVERE come from Hiroshima, and their track "Total Forced" is a raw and fast crasher like Riistetyt fighting The Partisans in Gai's recording studio. They sent me a copy of their "Irrationality" demo, which was recorded in May 2001 when they were a 3-piece. It's fast, chaotic UK-punk style, like Skeptix, but now, after many line-up changes, I think they're headed in the Appendix/TST/Disarm direction. Their first EP will soon be out on their own insane World label, so be sure to check it out!

I should also quickly mention LAST SURVIVORS who have a track on "Sabotage 2001" and who are remarkable for sounding exactly like Sweden's BRISTLES (no coincidence judging from the name). No d-beat, but still great, Scandi-influenced, stuff to raise a fist (and a glass) to. Their singer did the artwork on the cover of the "Chaos of Destruction" compilations, and must be a cool dude because he has Newtown Neurotics painted on his jacket! Watch out for the LAST SURVIVORS 7", which Crust War will soon release.

DECEIVING SOCIETY, from Mie, have GLOOM'S fucked-up noisy chaotic sound with the songwriting of FRAMTID, so underneath all the distortion and screams, there are actual tunes. Quite unbelievable! In the spring, Crust War put out their "Detonation Cruster" 12" with 8 great tracks. They formed in '97 and have since had some line-up changes. They appeared on a compilation tape called "Human Around Peace," a split demo with ABILITY (on Crust War), and another demo called "Cluster 16 Minutes Shock". I guess when they first played Osaka, with GLOOM in '98, all the mad punx were really surprised at how awesome the band was, so I'd love to see a video. The 12" has this info and more written by Jhonio of GLOOM, but it's all in Japanese. Even if you can't read the insert, the record is a must for any fan of the current Japanese raw punk scene. I'd hoped they'd have stayed around and released more awesome shit. The D.S. 12" is my favorite current record as of writing this report. Unfortunately, they've broken up.

Also from Mie were ABILITY, who contributed some of the best tracks on "Chaos of Destruction" vol. 2, I think. ABILITY'S singer is the guitarist of DECEIVING SOCIETY, and the bassist plays drums in D.S. I think ABILITY are broken up now, though. They were awesome, rough, d-beat stuff. Less noisy disorder than D.S., more just straight-forward Skitslickage. Pretty memorable, too.

Mie might have the best bands because CONTRAST ATTITUDE are from there as well. Like DISCLOSE, C.A. are a three-piece raw d-beat assault. They don't have any vinyl releases out, but they've recorded for some compilations including "Mie City Hardcore 2" on MCR. Believe me, this band will blow you away! Kawakami DISCLOSE told me that he was "knocked out" by them live. The "1999" demo is an amazing rawpunk recording that is very similar to the infamous "Aspect of War" tape/10" by DISCLOSE. I do think that C.A. will be very popular once more people have heard them. They are young and very dedicated, it seems, to playing true d-beat raw punk without simply copying the masters.

The band I have the highest hopes for are DEFECTOR. Their first gig was with FRAMTID as a "surprise guest". Shin writes: "They are ex-members of GLOOM! They play total d-beat twin guitar megaton heavy crust as fuck Doom ENT hardcore!" Their singer Jorge is just eighteen (just a little more than half the age of some of the other members), but he is definitely an insane crusty. The live video I saw of DEFECTOR was great because the show disintegrated into total near-riot chaos after they played only three songs. Their 7", called "Ultra Noize Violence" will come with issue #8 of *Crust War* zine which has just been released.

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

ZOE are a new band from Osaka, with the ex-guitarist of GLOOM (Taki) and Shin from FRAMTID helping on drums. Shin describes them as "Total Amebix worshipping raw biker metal punk!" They should have a release within the year and have already played a few gigs. I heard some practice tapes in Osaka and I must say that ZOE have the Amebix sound down to a science (all eras at once).

Another band in the megaton crust category is DECONSTRUCTION. This band is from Tokyo and it's a project band with members of LIFE, FRIGÖRA, COLLAPSE SOCIETY and ABRAHAM CROSS. The tape I've heard is a practice tape, I think, and it's really noisy, fucked-up trashcrust with a lot of long noise interludes. Talk about pain, headache and depression! I've heard that they take an influence from Belgium's PRIVATE JESUS DETECTOR, but I don't know if that's a useful reference point. Insane noise is the bottom line.

FINAL BLOOD BATH are also from Tokyo. Whereas bands like DISCLOSE and CONTRAST ATTITUDE have a heavy Swedish hc influence, FBB are straight DISCHARGE rip. It's pretty cool if you're ready for every riff to be from a DISCHARGE song! I think they're pretty young and will only improve. A certain d-beat master explained to me that FBB are currently at the stage of development where DISCLOSE were in '93 or '94. FBB have a demo tape called "Dead or Alive" as well as a couple live-show tapes traded between diehards. D-beat 'til death.

When I first walked into Bar Konton, members of DEFUSE were getting pissed up: Osaka must be the only city on earth with an all-female noise-thrash unit. DEFUSE sound like CONFUSE or GLOOM. They have a couple demos and a split 7". Check the interview with them in the newest issue of *Diminutive Rage*.

From Fukuoka (CONFUSE'S hometown) hail RABID who have a demo called "Total Chaotic Attack" out now: six songs with loud guitars, influenced by DISARM, ABSURD, ANTI-CIMEX and SHITLICKERS! The guitarist and bassist were in INSTINCT, who have a split 7" with DRILLER KILLER and the drummer played bass on DISCLOSE'S '98 recordings (splits w/ Totalitär and Squandered). I think RABID will improve in the future and hopefully release a well-recorded råpunk masterpiece on vinyl with a rawer guitar sound.

I'm sure everyone is familiar with S.D.S, who were one of the originators of the Japanese biker-crust sound by mixing Antisect and Motörhead. Today we have AGE, who play fast Motorcrust with political lyrics. The video I've seen of them makes them seem awesome—better than their records. Fans of later Amebix or current-day CROW would definitely like AGE. Check their "Exploding Insanity" 12"! They have a new 7" entitled "Blowing Wind" which is fucking amazing—one of the best new records I got in Japan.

Though I'm pretty sure they've broken up, COLLAPSE SOCIETY from Tokyo did release one 7" on Overthrow Records. This record, with its ugly yellow sleeve is still available in Japanese stores. The 7" has unbelievably fuzzy recording which makes the instruments difficult to distinguish—though the overall sound (*chaos non musica*) is memorable! Their live show was pretty powerful. As one of the first Japanese raw punk bands, they were quite influential. As I said, members of this defunct broken-English crusty outfit are in other bands now.

I didn't know too much about RESULT until I got their "Car Go Die" 7" from '97 on MCR. It blew me away! Totally fuzzy and raw "filthy stench punk crust" like the greatest Scandi-thrash units with Peaceville production. They mix that memorable songwriting skill of some of the more metallic bands with fast thrash for an excellent, memorable result. Ha. They have some great, if less fuzzy, tracks on "Chaos of Destruction" vol. 1. They also have an LP which I was happy to find in the store Glitterbeat in Nagoya. This LP is a totally DIY twin-vocal distort-o-chug crust crusher. It's seriously amazing. I highly recommend RESULT. Members were also in the legendary CFDL.

Finally, ABRAHAM CROSS were the kings of the Tokyo crust scene, and due to a heavy Sedition influence, their followers have supposedly all gone hippie-punk. Whoops! But, while they were around, ABRAHAM CROSS played awesome ENT-style holo-crust. They contributed the best tracks to the 2x7" compilation "Meaningful Consolidation," which sound exactly like ENT. Their LP, "Peace Can't Combine," which was recorded in '94, has finally been released on Crust War and is currently available (I have copies for distro). The band describes it as "Choking large crust mayhemic tracks LP." In a similar vein are REALITY CRISIS from Nagoya. I saw them play with Tragedy, and they sounded exactly like mid-period Doom. They must've had at least ten members, too. Total alcohol-driven, sore-throat, ear-bleeding devastation. On the split 10" with Sweden kang-masters AVSKUM, their stuff is awesome.

To sum up: if you haven't already heard them, you need to hear Disclose, Gloom, Framtid, Life, Deceiving Society, Laukaus, Poikkeus, and Detector. In that order. Ha ha.

I've put together a tape sampler of the bands listed above, so if you want a copy, send me $3.

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

New Year's Eve Noise Attack Volume 2 (2002)

New Year's Eve broke cold and gray in Portland. Big surprise. My three companions, Nick, Timmy, and Zanne, plus Tony Pointless, singer of RAMBO, and I, ate breakfast at The Paradox, a vegetarian cafe/diner. Our cook was Frank from ATROCIOUS MADNESS, which meant that we asked our waitress to write things like "brutal" and "Discharge" on the order. I had the Roasted Root soup, which was a thick but light combination of carrots, potatoes and legumes and a Tofurkey sandwich with guacamole and mustard. After eating, we drove to a record store--which was more difficult than it should have been due to the preponderence of No Left Turn signs in Portland. The store, Green Noise, was pretty good. The rarities on the wall were almost all a bit overpriced, but after our Discouraging record shopping trip the night before, we were unphased. I walked away with a Faction 7" and "Feel the Darkness" first press. After that store, we went to another one across the street. I didn't catch the name, but I'll call it "Back in 5" because that's what the sign on the door said. After a lively twenty-minute discussion of Mob 47 7" versus BGK 1st LP, the store owner returned, refried beans in hand. This store was also pretty cool, and we all bought something. Recently out-of-print crust and thrash was the name of the game. I got that Smash Your Face 7" I kept forgetting to pick up while it was around as well as the first press of "Pogo Attack" (my second copy, since the grooves on my first have worn down considerably). The prices were pretty sweet. Oddly enough, the store owner recognized our motley crew from the previous morning in Seattle's awesome GLOBE vegan eatery. The world grows smaller by the minute.

Back at the Partners in Crime house (ahem, house names are really lame, but just to piss them off, I have to name theirs in print), we did I-don't-know-what for a while. If anything, staying at this house showed that as serious as their bands might be, these Tennessee transplants can be pretty funny, especially when lampooning Southern-drawl idiocy. We listened to a whole bunch of Japanese records, talked about even more Japanese records, and all contemplated napping before the festivities of the evening. Of course, by the time I realized I *really* needed to nap, it was too late. I was tired, headachey and cranky. But ATROCIOUS MADNESS was playing, so I didn't have much to complain about.

After the drinkers began to get their drink on, we wandered over to the house where the show was at (Did I mention how I started to hear the Southern drawl coming from my mouth, too?). It got pretty cold outside. The house was a pretty typical sparse punk house which would hold shows. The basement was a pretty cool space that reminded me of the ABC No Rio basement. When we got there, the crust wasn't as thick as I'd expected and there were quite a few studded-out spiky-haired punks which always makes me happy. The first band of the New Year's Eve Noise Attack Vol. 2 was LEBEN DEN TOTEN.

Frank had told us that LEBEN DEN TOTEN was formed after he picked up a guitar and Randy, the drummer, sat at a drumkit. Neither of them had ever played either instrument before. (I should mention that Randy does a hilarious little thrash zine called "How Much Art Can You Take.") Chanel, the vocalist, had never been in front of a mic before. The idea was to sound like Disorder. Well, I don't think that even the earliest Disorder gigs were as chaotically noisy as the first gig by these inept thrashers. In case you're unsure, that's a GOOD thing in my book. I really enjoyed the CONFUSE-ing noise. Randy's drumming was a total mess, but he looked like he was loving it. The only complaint would be that the vocals were too quiet, but I'll chalk that up to Chanel's shyness...she'll get louder in time...by the way, Portland punks are the most SHY bunch of motherfuckers I've met. I'm no Dick Clark, but jeez. Anyway, the show was off to a great start, and knowing that these dudes and dudette had just picked up their respective instruments inspired me to start a band by getting a guitar and a Confuse record myself. Call me unoriginal, but I'll let you know what happens in the end.

TK showing what ATROCIOUS MADNESS do to me.

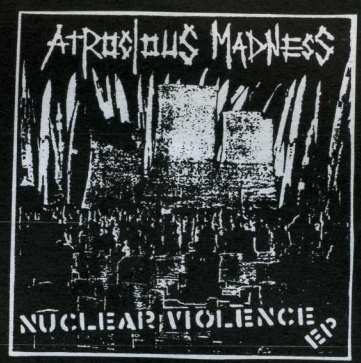
After some tomfoolery, including a discussion of how RIISTETYT's "Raped Future" LP is the pinnacle of human musical achievement as judged by Brad from FROM ASHES RISE, and a few invites to sit on the laps of certain punks who'd come from NJ for the occasion, I found myself in the basement again for BLOOD SPIT NIGHTS. This band is comprised of members of RELIGIOUS WAR and DEFIANCE. The guitarist (I think) had some pretty ridiculous facepaint on and all members had the requisite spiky hair, studded jackets and Discharge shirts. I think they even had a Discharge tape playing on a stereo during their set. I do think they were great, but they don't sound nearly as Japanese as they might think they do. Add a few Motörhead bass riffs and more charging drumming, and they could head toward KURO's sound, but they're nowhere near their namesake GAI. During this set, the crust thickened in the basement and about three kids started dancing in the most annoying way: hands swinging all over the place, pushing off people in the back, falling down, etc. These kids were making it impossible for half the room to watch the band because we had to watch the kids to make sure we didn't get hit. A few people told the kids to calm down and to dance less selfishly, but it only seemed to make them dance more violently. At that point, I figured there was going to be a fight. I know that all my friends were pissed and when we talked to the kids, they tried to act like we were telling them not to have fun. Puh-leeze. If anything, they were forcing most of us not to have fun. I decided that for ATROCIOUS MADNESS and RAMBO, I'd be way up front anyway, so I don't know how violent the dancing was--but I do know that some idiot broke the house water main by falling on the pipe. Assholes.

New Year's Eve Noise Attack Volume 2 (2002)

The 'MADNESS taped to the walls three enormous UK-peace-punk-style white on black banners with political slogans and pictures. From the banners to their fashion sense and stage presence, ATROCIOUS MADNESS looked punk as fuck. The set began with fucked-up noise and the feedback and distortion didn't let up until they were finished. Despite some minorly annoying problems with the bass cutting out which slowed down the pace of the set, ATROCIOUS MADNESS were amazing. Frank was full of rage and paced frantically back and forth during any pauses, screaming "Fuck! Go!" The highlight, though, was the drumming: Dominic was falling off the stool because he was hitting so many things in such rapid, chaotic succession. I always say that good drummers make a band, and this set proved it. It was insane! The 'MADNESS aren't exactly a sing-along band, but the crowd seemed really into them. It was definitely the best live set I'd seen in months, perhaps only comparable to one of theprevious year's riotous 9 Shocks Terror gigs. The difference here, though, was that no one got hurt, no foreign objects flew through the air and the show space survived for another day.

I vaguely remember a heated discussion about women's pants before the next set, but it was New Year's Eve, so I guess anything was possible. RAMBO took the stage, but refused to play until their guitarist was wearing at least 6 studded/bullet belts so that everyone would know that he was the punkest kid at the show. Belt donations were made, I gave a brief tutorial on the proper way to wear a punk belt, and the set began with Pointless asking everyone not to make others uncomfortable with their dancing. RAMBO is great because they mix the hardest mosh parts around with songs about beating up cops and riding bikes and rockin' with Kropotkin. I do think that RAMBO might be a band that is appreciated more by those who know the band well, as evidenced by the enormous crowds of punx and thrashers at their Philly gigs. But it was awesome to see them in a Portland basement.

After the thrash attack came to an end, we hung out a bit more. Details are fuzzy, but I do recall talking to Frank about who has the best collection of Japanese records in Portland and seeing Frank's 100+ Hawkwind records. Oh, and, how could I forget all the people shooting their guns as a celebration of the new year...they sounded really close! After that, we went back to the Partners in Crime house to try to sleep even though the ringing in our ears was deafening.



TOTAL NOISE ADDICTION

Though traditional Japanese hardcore bands from the earliest days to today have always stood apart from bands from other nations due to their professionalism, technical aptitude, and songwriting ability, there is an equally remarkable tradition of Japanese hardcore bands who play the most insane, non-musical, chaotic punk. Though their sound is diametrically opposed to that of a band like JUDGEMENT or LIP CREAM, these bands bring a similar level of seriousness to the (noise not) music that sets them apart from most other bands. It might be easier to make fuzzed-out noise à la GAI than to make full, warm, rich 'core à la Judgement simply because the former can happen by accident under the right circumstances while the latter requires intentionality, but, in the end, even though I might listen to JUDGEMENT more often, GAI always put a smile on my face. Here is a list of what I think are the top five noisy, fucked-up and disorderly Japanese records from the early '80s.

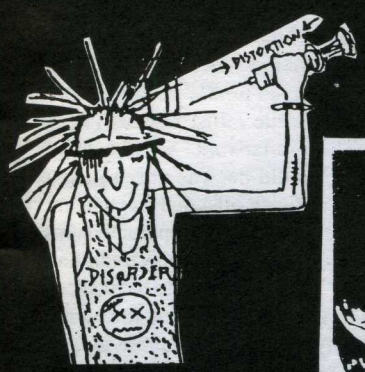
GAI "Extermination" flexi (Blue Jug): Prior to the record in question, GAI released a couple demo tapes, which are now intermittently available in Japan on CD and LP, but the flexi, recorded in Sept. '84, is their best material in my opinion. GAI took DISORDER'S style, including the style of the sleeve artwork, and made it their own. Five of the songs on the flexi are dirty, chaotic noisethrash, while the sixth, called "Blood Spit Night (for ever 76) " is an upbeat, though still fuzzed-out, pogo anthem. GAI mutated into SWANKYS, and "Blood Spit Night" is the template for the '77-meets-five-distortion-pedals sound of SWANKYS. SWANKYS released many records, but I think the '86 flexi, entitled "Neo Damage," but also known as "Rocknroll History Fuck Off," is the best material because of its hyperspeed melodic basslines underneath a shag rug of distortion and nasally vocals. The two previous releases, a 7" and an LP, are not nearly as good as the flexi. In fact, that very rare first LP, "Very Best of Hero," is so discordant and snotty, it's almost too much for me to take, so I never dropped the cash to get it myself, but some noisecore afficianados swear by it. All SWANKYS material, it seems, is available on CD in Japan. For some odd reason, though, the GAI "Extermination" flexi has been bootlegged numerous times—perhaps almost as many times as Kuro or Gism. But the original is not as rare as you might think, so I'd recommend ignoring all the shitty bootlegs and waiting patiently to find a cheap copy of the original.

KURO 1st flexi (Blue Jug): For years, I thought KURO'S 8" was the shit. Though I'm still rather fond of its motörfuzzthrash, when it comes to a burst of noisy violence, it's tough to top the 2 live tracks on this record. After what sounds like an explosion and women screaming in fear, Morikawa cries out and the Lemmy-only-wishes-he-could-play-this-fast bass and chainsaw guitar rip into a song. Despite the feedback and chaos (and the thin, tinny sound that inheres to flexis), this live recording is loud and strong. That first song is also remarkable because it's extremely fast for Japan in '83. What's even more important to note, is that GAI, KURO and CONFUSE were all from Kyushu, not even the same island as most Japanese hc bands! The second song is a similarly noisy and robust affair, though it's more mid-tempo. Two songs, no titles, one side of a flexi limited to 1000 copies make for a classic and legendary record that should be in every serious hardcore collection.

GUDON "Zannin Seija" flexi (Kagai Mousou): GUDON are one of those bands that have never gotten their due respect for some inexplicable reason. Of course, Guy, who runs the amazing Blood Sucker records and Zigyaku, the hardcore virtuoso behind BASTARD and JUDGEMENT, both got their start in GUDON. As traditional Japanese hardcore goes, GUDON'S tracks on the compilation LP "Hang the Sucker 2" are some of the best stuff—even better than DEATH SIDE'S stuff on the same record. But GUDON'S first flexi sounds nothing like their later stuff. This flexi is a pissraw live recording from inside a garbage can full of short-circuiting Marshalls rolling down Mt. Fuji. Simply put, it's AMAZING! Beneath the layers of feedback and treble, one might even be able to discern tunes! The fourth track also has a runaway bullet train of a solo! Unfortunately, as the flexi was left off the discography CD, I think the band members may be somewhat displeased with this record nowadays. In my opinion, this is the rarest and most expensive record in this list, so start saving your lunch money or you might never hear classic tracks like "Cock" and "Life is no merit." Finally, with the zombies doin' the dog next to a crucifix on the front, this record may have one of the best picture sleeves ever.

STATE CHILDREN "Bombshelter for the Moneymaking!" flexi: This record is the most obscure one on this list, but fans of disturbing noise warfare should take note. As a friend once said, this is ultra burst noise core. The guitar is so fuzzed out, it doesn't even sound like a guitar. In fact, it sounds like nothing I've ever heard before. It's AM-radio hiss turned up to eleven—intentionally. It's difficult to tell when one "song" ends and the next begins, but one can occasionally make out a chorus or a bridge...I think. The vocals are the most lunatic rantings this side of TERVEET KÄDET: mic-swallowing shreiks and moos (yes, moos) galore! While noise performers these days manipulate electronic frequencies to try to achieve the most zoned out, bizarre noises, STATE CHILDREN took the three normal instruments in a punk band and turned them into one fuzz destruction unit years earlier. Maybe someday I'll have the pleasure of hearing their ultra-rare demo. But hopefully before that, I'll track down this flexi. If you have one, I'll trade or buy enthusiastically!

CONFUSE "Spending Loud Night" (Kings World): Of course, I should've rounded out this list with a fifth flexi—and CONFUSE'S "Nuclear Addicts" is no small contender in the "SICKEST flexi" category, but have you ever heard "Spending Loud Night"? It takes the award as the finest example of raw noise punk-n-disorderly chaos destruction in history. Recorded in '83, probably around the same time as the equally psychotic "Indignation" demo (re-released on an essential LP), this 7" wasn't released until '87, but let's thank the fuzzgods that it was released then or else we might never have known the perfection of these four tracks. Overdriven guitar strangulation and whirling dervish drums accompany vociferous yelping about turning up the volume on the noisy thrash and nuclear war—could it be any better? I doubt it. In fact, the version of "Hate War" on this 7" is better than the flexi version, and "Spending Loud Night" is the flipped-out noise anthem I want played at my funeral (it might actually wake the dead). No hardcore collection is complete without this gem.



If you want a CD-R with these five records on it plus some bonus rarities in the same vein, please get in touch.

After all that, if you've noised yourself into oblivion, SEVENTEEN are the perfect late '70s UK punk-pop antidote. Remember back when being a youth meant battling on bank holidays at Brighton? Yeah, me neither, but not since SOB said "Let's Go Beach" has going to the beach sounded like so much fun. Flip it over and you won't be able to let go of that girl or this record. It was 17 years of hell, but this record makes me wish I were 17 again. (Reissued on Vinyl Japan)

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

WELL YOU ARSE CRAWLING BASTARD SUCK MY ARSE RELIGION JESUS CHRIST IT'S ALL A FUCKING FARCE!!

-DISCHARGE. Duh.

Reviews of the Arseholes

Severed Head of State "s/t" 7" (Communichaos Media): Holy fucking shit! SHOS prove on this recording that they are the fiercest, most brutal and mature thrash band in the US. From the GISM-esque sleeve to the lyrics like "I love it when flags are flown at half-mast / It means that another motherfucker has died / A nation in mourning is the nation for me" to song titles like "Tune for Fucker" and "Cop on Fire," SHOS seethe with rage that is only tempered by the band's obvious love for hardcore. The drumming is a fuckin' insane assault and Todd and Jack share the vocal duties more than on the band's earlier stuff. This 7" has the best versions of what I believe to be their best 4 tracks. Basically, you need your head examined if this record doesn't make you bust.

Point of Few/Mihoen! split 7" (Kick N Punch): It's rare that I say the music is secondary, and perhaps even rarer that I'm glad a record is a split, but this 7" is that rare case. It's a split because the bands are good friends and wanted to work together to release something meaningful to each other—the only good reason for releasing a split, I think. The record shows how cool a DIY release can be, and how the commitment and love that goes into handmade sleeves and booklets will always be punker and more substantial than any slick packaging. MIHOEN! win for me with their burly, memorable SEEIN' RED-esque Dutch thrash. POINT OF FEW are more on the power-violence tip, but their ideas and sincerity make up for that slight drawback! Fast shit from what has become one of the most outstanding labels of recent memory.

Sangre De Los Puercos demo tape 1 & "Our Apathy, Our Doom!" tape: (Note: when I wrote this review, the band was still around, but now it seems they've broken up, so I'm going to change all the verbs to past tense.) I *was* hesitant to say anything but positive things about these tapes because this band *was* NYC's only real thrash band other than BALANCE OF TERROR (who've also fuckin' broken up). But they're demo tapes, so we *could have* safely *assumed* the band *would have improved.* The general feel is mid-tempo thrash with paint-stripping vocals and a South American hc influence. I wish the band were faster and the songs were simpler, but I am biased, an addict of the short and fast. Todd from DISTRAUGHT *was* on drums, and he *beat* the shit out of everything like a guitarist who *didn't* know how to play drums playing drums. I think he should *have played* a d-beat all the time, because the few times he *did* so are the best parts (and he *didn't* cheat!). Mostly, though, he *played* the same rhythm as the guitar, rather than keeping a beat. It's a bit strange, but I think maybe others would dig it more than I do. The second tape, with tens songs (!), already *showed* a good deal of improvement. Either way, I *was* very excited for this band, and I *had hoped* they *would stick* around because NYC needs them. *(Sigh.)*

Força Macabra "Nos Tumulos Abertos" LP (Agipunk)
Força Macabra "Caveira Da Força" LP (Mind Control)
Selfish "Burning Sensation" LP (N/A)/ CD (HG Fact): SELFISH and FORÇA MACABRA represent the twin silicone breasts of foreign hardcore, Japanese and Brazilian, respectively: they are the expression of the form's perfection, yet the connisseur can't help but feel dismay at the inauthenticity. What DISCLOSE did for DISCHARGE—that is to say, internalize every aspect of the members' playing so that they can accurately play the style without actually stealing the music—SELFISH and FORÇA MACABRA attempt to do for DEATH SIDE and ARMAGEDOM, respectively. Luckily for these bands, I don't even think it's necessary to get the reference to enjoy the amazing music. I'm not sure if I think this is SELFISH's best release (I really like the songs on the split 7" with Liberate), but it certainly is addictive. As much as I tried to resist its sultry charm, I can't stop listening to it. I think I've even learned some of the lyrics ("Kill murder a sickly smile / Just now as the fist bites"...man, this is *too* good!). The guitarwork is sweepingly authoritative, precise, and intricate, as it should be. The only negative, which takes some acclimatization, is the at-times off-kilter bassplaying, which is cancelled by the positive of the fuckin' rad, hyperactive bass drum. As drummer Angeleyes told me about the *choice* to play traditional, Burning-Spirits-style Japanese hardcore, "Japanese bands have chosen that style coz that simply is the best style TODAY to express the burning urge that lies behind the hardcore-mentality/lifestyle in Japanese society." But what's it mean when a Finnish band tries to express the burning urge that lies behind a subcultural lifestyle several thousand miles away? The answer is: don't think, just listen to the music and pound your fuckin' fist because it doesn't get much better.

As for FORÇA MACABRA, the "Nos Tumulos Abertos" LP is a reissue of their impossible-to-find first LP. This new pressing has some extra demo tracks, which fans will recognize from a few of their split 7"s. Unfortunately, while nearly exactly duplicating the original sleeve with a handsome gatefold, they didn't list these extra demo tracks. A good description of this band's Brazilian-thrashcore-via-Finnish-homebrew sound comes from their hilarious webpage: the sound is "piss-burnt." It makes sense when you listen to it. I'm always astonished when bands intentionally make everything sound accidental, or is it when bands accidentally make everything sound intentional? Who knows? The evil new LP, "Caveira Da Força," in another handsome gatefold sleeve, has such ridiculous thrash-metal solos and riffery, that I couldn't listen to it for a few months without rolling on the floor laughing, but after I got over that, I realized it's a powerful and angry just-this-side-of-metal, *hardcore* record. This record's fuller soud might have resulted from a sober trip to the studio, but I wouldn't wager on it. Feather your mullet and shine your bullet belt when FORÇA MACABRA come to your town. And check: http://koti.nettilinja.fi/~anthares/fmindex.html

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

Reviews of the Arseholes

Atrocious Madness "Nuclear Violence" 7" (Atrocious; Japan tour only)
Atrocious Madness "Total Control" LP (Wicked Witch): I've been following ATROCIOUS MADNESS since their demo came out a few years ago. For me, they've clarified exactly what is wrong and could be right with hardcore in the United States in the last decade. Most American bands are content to play generic hardcore that fits neatly into trends, that has hooks based on every insubstantial aspect other than the music itself, and that could easily be played by any other random assemblage of subpar musicians. ATROCIOUS MADNESS are not musical whizkids (they barely knew how to play their instruments when they started), but their dedication to their specific vision and style drove them to play a kind of extreme hardcore that no American band has played before. Obviously, DISORDER, CONFUSE, DISCLOSE and GLOOM created the template of overdriven, ultra-distorted, feedback-chaos-core, but ATROCIOUS MADNESS stand on their own as proof that dedication and deep love for insane hardcore can lead to great things. It might be difficult to imagine that a band like AM whose songs are all essentially quite similar could markedly improve over time, but the LP, like the Japanese tour 7" before it, do sound different from all their previous releases. The 7" is their rawest, most fucked-up recording; indeed, it sounds quite like some of the ridiculously noisy Japanese flexis of yore. But the "Total Control" LP is the high-water mark of raw noise. The addition of the new drummer Dominic has greatly improved the feel of the music because he's so fast, extreme and intense. The momentum from his rolls nearly throws him off his seat! AM have the ability to clear rooms when they play live because most complacent hardcore fans are afraid of truly punk (non-)music; in the past, bands like CRUDOS have caused us to stop and re-evaluate our relationship to the scene with their words, but AM do the same thing with their detonation crust, and that is truly remarkable. This record is inspirational because it shows that even familiar, well-loved bands can still surprise me and because it proves that not all the bands in the US are medio-core! PS: Sweet State Children reference in the intro.

Extreme Noise Terror "Punker Than Punk" 7" (boot): Sometimes the art of writing record reviews becomes an exercise in forgiveness. This is one such case. I will forgive the crackly, crappy vinyl and utterly horrendous cover art (Is that a fucking chihuahua?) not to mention the fact that this is, in the end, a "covers" record. I must also exercise some forgiveness as I express my boundless love for EXTREME NOISE TERROR. Yes, they sold out. Yes, they now eat at McDonald's while on tour as a death metal suck act playing shows with a high guarantee. But, c'mon, I say, how many other fucking bands have talked about LÄRM on MTV? For years, I myself had thought that this exact record was the one thing the world needed. Seriously. I think the first time I heard ENT covering the COCKNEY REJECTS was one of the greatest moments of my life. If you'd asked me, "Would ENT covering 'I'm Not a Fool' be the best concept ever?" I certainly would've answered, "Yes!"And it is. Furthermore, ENT, on the "Punk's Not Dread" compilation LP, covered THE KILLJOYS "Johnny Won't Get to Heaven," and for all these years, I've been saying that this act proved their historical astuteness. As you should know, that song, by THE KILLJOYS, was certainly one of the first hardcore songs, or at least one of the first punk songs to imitate, to a degree, MOTÖRHEAD. The other band that made a good living imitating, to a degree, MOTÖRHEAD, was the one whom ENT cover three times on this EP—DISCHARGE! And they cover three of my favorite DISCHARGE songs: "You Take Part in Creating This System," "No T.V. Sketch," and "Religion Instigates." Sure, we all have ENT these songs as they were originally released in our record libraries (we do, right?), but if there are two things I'm sure of, they are that one can never have enough ENT records (before they went suck) and one can never listen to "I Am a Bloody Fool" enough times.

Stupid Babies Go Mad "Kichigai & Knife" 7" (No Sense): This is the best SBGM release to date. Songs like "Smoke 'Til Die" realize their awesome sound, which is like SMASH YOUR FACE meets MOTÖRHEAD or, perhaps, TEENGENERATE meets ROCKY & THE SWEDEN. Rockist poses assumed without assuming rockist poses. As the back of the sleeve says, "Ultra Punk Revenge," and judging from the pictures I've seen and stories I've heard, I believe it. Get this.

World Burns to Death "Human Meat...Tossed to the Dogs of War" 7" (Prank)
World Burns to Death "Human Meat...Tossed to the Dogs of War" tape (self): My friend Simon Harvey recently wrote, "Amazing the amount of North American hardcore coming out lately in styles that would have been pretty much unthinkable a few years back." I think he's hit upon an excellent historical development that I don't want to allow to go unchronicled. Currently, the American hardcore punk scene has reached a point of paradigmatic shift. I would say that this has happened once before: at the end of the '80s. Then, bands like Born Against, Nausea, Citizens Arrest, Destroy, Antischism, and others, with labels like AYF, Profane, Vermiform, Mind Control introduced a new musical style as well as a new form of militant anarchist discourse that essentially drew a line in the sand. Unfortunately, many resented this demarcation as they saw the new side as one of kneejerk political correctness, closed-mindedness and slogan-based dogma. The result, as we well know, was the dreariness of the early to mid '90s. I don't think we can consider either side to have won. Today, with some of the same participants still active from those years, aware of their mistakes, we are witnessing another change with WORLD BURNS TO DEATH, 9 Shocks Terror, Atrocious Madness, Severed Head of State, Tragedy, and others leading the shift. These, the finest American bands today, are stringently DIY, and, as such, they allow their actions to speak their political messages, which is why, I think, sloganeering and speechwriting has largely disappeared even though lyrics remain as stridently political as ever. I think we can cautiously take for granted, to a certain degree, that because of the positive effects of bands like The Pist, Crudos and Aus-Rotten, kids are *aware* of political issues, so bands today no longer have to take the role of educator. This, luckily for us, allows them to play incendiary thrash, which, without smothering itself in the details, spews venom and anger at the fucked-up fucking system. You'll notice that bands these days spend less time preaching from the stage, but the kids don't seem any less politically aware (though, I guess one could argue, they aren't any *more* aware either).

WORLD BURNS TO DEATH play extreme, consummate hardcore with the *faux raw* production that is essential to great hardcore these days (it was OK to be raw by accident in '83, but now bands have to work quite hard to achieve raw recordings that actually sound good). With "Hear Nothing"-style waves of guitar noise, KURO–esque distorted vocals, and Jack's furious, "fuck"-every-other-word lyrics, this is American hardcore that, at long last, grabs us by the collar, tosses us against the wall, and loudly asks, "Are you finally finished with all that mediocre crap that came before?" There is a new line in the sand, drawn not by ideology, but by full stacks feeding back, relentless driving drums, and microphones smashed into foreheads. Lyrics like "Tongues torn out / Brains blow out... / Acid in the face of human rights" (this *will* get stuck in your head and you *will* be snarling this under your breath as you walk down the street) don't allow us to forget that this is political thrash. But, I think, above all, this is thrash for thrash's sake and that, in itself, is the new paradigm which I'm thrilled to watch evolve.

DSB "Pure Cultivation" CDEP (Discrete): The highly anticipated return of DEFIANCE OF SHIT BASTARDS! As anyone who has spoken to me for more than three minutes probably knows, I'm nuts about DSB. Seeing them in Tokyo in July was almost as awesome as seeing GAUZE. Just one listen to their records should indicate that their live show would be ultra-high energy, so my expectations were high, but they actually managed to exceed them. Plus, I can't argue with white leather jackets. The recording that preceded this one, their tracks on Overthrow's "One Shot One Kill" compilation LP, was their weakest material. The line-up on that recording was different, which explains the different sound: slower, more rockin', and without the radical, sharp shouting I love on their previous material. "Pure Cultivation" has the same line-up as the earlier material, but I must say it doesn't have the same production values. Their "Wings Continue to Strive..." 12" has some of the most powerful, crunchy, but not slick, recording ever achieved by a thrash band. These three songs don't have the heavy, distorted bass and full sound of their earlier material, but the drums are driving as always. These songs also have the typical *fighting against* feel that I love so much. In the end, while these aren't the band's best songs, any fan will want to hear this stuff. If you're unlike me, you might wait until Partners in Crime releases the vinyl version, but if you're like me, you should be sealing the envelope already.

More Reviews

Rock Bottom & the Spys "Rich Girl" 7" (Breakmyface): At a time when scumbags bootleg common records, using mediocre sleeves, paying no attention to sound quality, and attempting to create artificial rarities with which to line their scumpockets, this reissue is a proverbial light in the darkness. The ROCK BOTTOM 7" is the rarest of US punk records; only a handful of copies exist around the world. No master tape exists, but as the insert notes, it's time to put an end to the "we need the master tape" fallacy since mint old vinyl will always sound better than a tape because the latter naturally detoriorates over time while the former does not. Furthermore, no picture sleeve ever accompanied the vinyl of the original release, but as a result of some astounding detective work, Ryan Richardson found one mock-up of a proposed sleeve (which is a truly spectacular full-color collage sleeve). Two-hundred (of the 600) copies of this reissue include this sleeve, and believe me, it's worth the extra bucks for it. On to the music: is it possible that one record could be the best punk rock, synth punk, and hardcore record of all time? Until I heard this one, I'd thought not, but ROCK BOTTOM & THE SPYS provides the angriest, snarling, hard-to-the-core, synth-based punk rock I've ever heard. This record continues to, um, break my face. Anyone who's ever thought of bootlegging a pedestrian pseudo-rarity should hang his or her head in shame because this release has proven that there are no impossibilities when it comes to reissues. Furthermore, proceeds from the release go to benefit ROCK, who has hit bottom, and is now locked up. See www.breakmyface.com.

SS "The Original" 12" (no label): The kids today have no perspective. With people getting into Mecht Mensch before Black Flag, but Spazz before Lärm, it becomes difficult to understand how bands fit into an overall history—not to mention the lies about casaulity and linearity imposed by pseudo-historians like Steven Blush. Hopefully, this record will smash some of the youth's preconceptions. Originally released in '85ish, the SS 12" knocked Tim Yohannon to the floor with its blitzkrieg thrash that was recorded live in '79 in Japan. I've said it often, and this bootleg goes far in helping to bolster my argument: there was no single "first" hardcore band—the musical form developed simultaneously around the world with bands that had no knowledge of each other. Years ago, long before I'd heard SS, my view of hardcore changed when I read the exact paragraph of Tim Yo's words—which is reprinted on the insert of this record—about SS, Middle Class and Bad Brains beginning independently of one another.

For my money, this is the best of the "first" hardcore records. It's so wild, noisy and uncontrolled, it's more extreme than most records that came after it. In fact, the Ramones cover is faster than SOB's version of the same song from a decade later—and they were one of the fastest bands ever! I can't help but smile when I listen to this record. In addition to making this rarity available to the masses, this thing has what I find lacking in so many other sub-legit reissues: aesthetically pleasing and original packaging, improved sound quality over the original, extra information, and one-sided vinyl (the one-sided 12" has to be my favorite format!). True hardcore fans will love this. Note: I've read a couple reviews that say that the original release was one-sided and the band was from Osaka; it wasn't and they weren't.

Conga Fury

Here are some crucial translations of Japanese band's names and one song title. Apologies if I'm inaccurate, but I've done my best based on conversations I had while in Japan:

- ★ ABURADAKO: This is a tough one—literally, it means "oil octopus," but I think, based on something I saw in an old zine, it was a bastardization of Abura-taco or "oil taco." Then again, I could be wrong about that. Either way, it's essentially meaningless.
- ★ GUDON: Crass (but not as in C.R.A.S.S., the UK band you might have heard of).
- ★ IKKA SHINJYUU: Whole family suicide.
- ★ JIGA (from "Jisatu Omnibus" 8"): Ego.
- ★ JITOKU (song by REBEL, appears on "Killed by Hardcore #3" LP): Masturbation.
- ★ KIKEIJI: Freak.
- ★ KURO: Black, but their symbol also means White, so their name is a double entendre.
- ★ ZOUO: Ultra-hate

Attention Japanese bands!

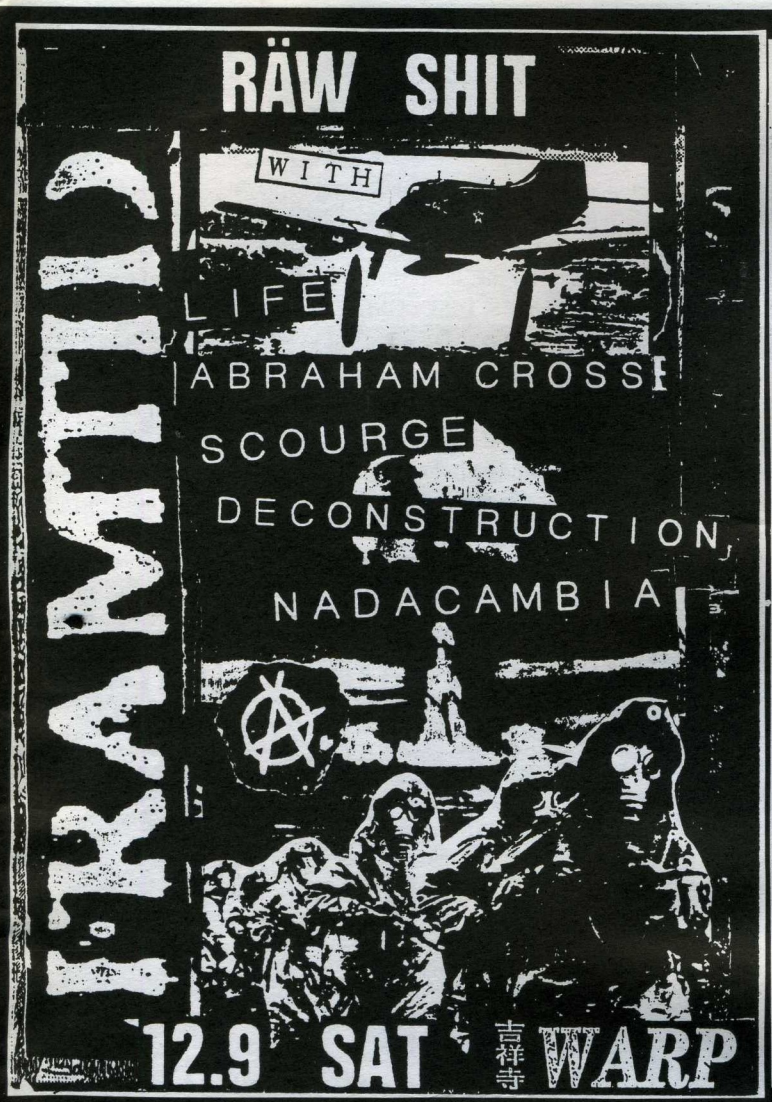
I would like to contact any of the following bands, so if you are in one or you know a member, please contact me using the e-mail address or regular mailing address in front.

- ★ Blaze
- ★ Worms' Meat
- ★ Ikka Shinjyuu
- ★ Poisonous Cross Gibbet

It was easy.

It was cheap.

Go and do it.



DSB's van

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.

Disclose

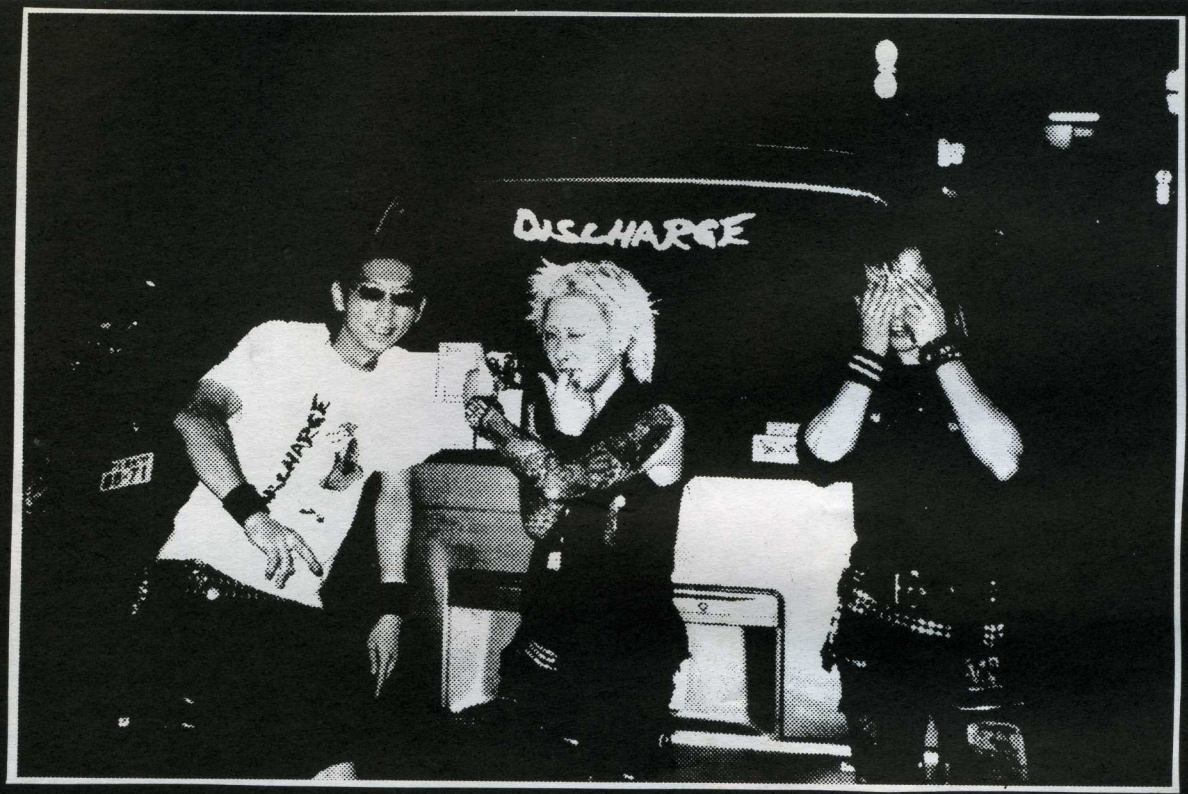
I'm sure all readers of GOTA are intimately familiar with the pleasure of pressing your ear against a speaker while playing SKITSLICKERS at full volume. But I must regretfully report that the meaning of the term "raw punk" cannot be understood fully or appreciated until you've heard DISCLOSE live. Kawakami's guitar sound is a noise blast that'll turn your bones to dust. It is the aural expression of all our rage, our hatred of the warsystem, the sound heard when the innocent die, perhaps the sound of a heart breaking, or for me, the positive antidote to the brutal negativity of capitalism. Let me get historical for a moment: Big bang, electric guitar's invention, STOOGES, DISCLOSE.

Although it defies my limited understanding of how these things work, I won't anyway reveal the exact recipe for such raw, skin-shredding, ear-bleeding noise. Suffice it to say that the number of pedals Kawakami uses exceeds the number of fingers on my hand and it looked like all the knobs on the Marshall head were turned all the way to the right. All the bands I saw, from ASPHALT to ASSAULT, ROCKY & THE SWEDEN to TRAGEDY had excellent, warm Marshall-based guitar sounds, but DISCLOSE turned this sound on its head. Their noise is the concrete inversion of rocknroll's democratic lie because as its extremity addicts us, it excludes all those who fear the extreme, but this only draws in the noise lovers further, into a vortex of distorted noise where nothing is more true, unmediated, or authentic.

Kawakami's Classic D-BEAT Top 5

5. Jezus & the Gospelfuckers/Genocide Express/Agent Orange
4. Diatribe
3. Eu's Arse split EP and demo
2. Fader War
1. Skitslickers.

It was easy. It was cheap. Go and do it.



Don't believe everything you read! Here are some great zines done by fellow fanatics of the raw and loud. Send at least a dollar for a copy:

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26 Lacona Drive
Patterson, NY 12563 USA

Rehash / Zanne
1007 NE Ravenna Blvd. #A
Seattle WA 98109 USA

Organ of Hope / Rob
PO Box 3400
Wallington, NJ 07057 USA

Sudden Death / Chris
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